NATION

Can't stall Waqf law made by Parl, Centre tells SC

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

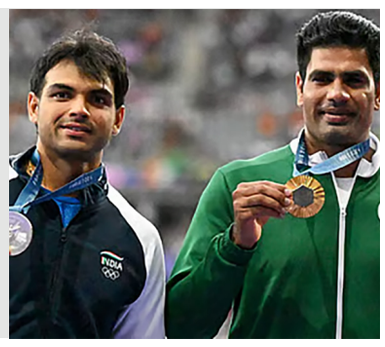
Pak may source Indian goods indirectly amid trade halts

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Nadeem declines Neeraj Chopra's invite

≫ Page: 8 ≪



www.twitter.com/EnglishSalar
www.facebook.com/EnglishSalar
www.instagram.com/dailysalarenglish
youtube.com/@dailysalardigital

SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 26 APRIL 2025 | SATURDAY | BENGALURU | 27 SHAWWAL, 1446 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 112 | Pages: 8

PAK FIRES ACROSS LOC; INDIA HITS BACK

Security forces kill LeT leader linked to the attacks; India reportedly willing to suspend ceasefire

SRINAGAR, 25 APRIL

The Indian Army responded to unprovoked firing by Pakistani military at some places along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir amid sharp escalation of tension between the two neighbours following the Pahalgam terror attack.

Military sources said the Pakistan military resorted to the firing on Thursday, adding there were no reports of any casualties.

There is no official word from the Indian Army on the Pakistani firing and the Indian response.

"There were incidents of small arm firing at some places on Line of Control initiated by Pakistan," said a source. "The firing was effectively responded to."

As tensions rose, Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi reviewed the security situation in Srinagar.

Meanwhile, a Lashkar-e-Taliba (LeT) terrorist was killed by security forces during the ongoing encounter in Bandipora, Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Friday.

The terrorist associate, Altaf Lalli was reportedly a senior leader LeT. He is suspected to have played a major role in the recent terror attack.

According to police officials, the two policemen suffered gunshot wounds and have been shifted to a nearby hospital, where their condition is said to be stable.

A woman walks through the debris of the house of Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist Asif Sheikh at Tral in Pulwama district, on Friday. The house was allegedly destroyed by explosives that were stored in its premises. Security forces continue to hunt for the prime accused

PHOTO: PTI

> **I saw a man wearing a camouflage uniform placing an object like a bomb on top of the house. After that, the house was demolished...We are innocent. They have destroyed our house.**
>
> -Sister of one of the suspected terrorists

Meanwhile, reports suggest that India is "seriously considering" suspending the 2021 ceasefire agreement with Pakistan. According to CNN-News18, New Delhi's top apparatus is gearing up to prepare for any repercussions .

Meanwhile, a combing operation to track down three escaped terrorists entered its second day on Friday, with security agencies strengthening the multi-layered cordon. Forces are scouring the forest area in Udhampur district, where the terrorists were believed to be hiding.

In related news, the house of two of the terrorists, including the prime suspect were destroyed when explosives believed to be stored there went off, officials said on Friday. *—Agencies*

Pak refuses to handover BSF jawan for 3rd day

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

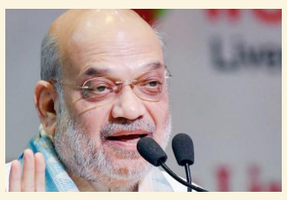
Pakistan Rangers refused to hand over a BSF jawan, who inadvertently strayed to the other side, for the third straight day on Friday and remained non-committal on his whereabouts, official sources said.

The jawan, Constable Purnam Sahu of the 182nd Border Security Force (BSF), was apprehended by the Rangers from a farming field along the Ferozepur district of Punjab on Wednesday.

Sources told PTI that the BSF has made multiple contacts and sought flag meetings with the Rangers to secure the release of its jawan but the response has "not been positive" till now.

The BSF has also alerted all its formations and asked them to be on "heightened vigil" along the 2,289 km India-Pakistan border that runs from Jammu in the north to Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat in the west in the wake of the Pahalgam attack and related developments. *—PTI*

Constable Purnam Sahu of the 182nd Border Security Force (BSF), was apprehended by the Rangers from a farming field along the Ferozepur district of Punjab on Wednesday. Sources said that the BSF has made multiple attempts to secure his release ***PHOTO: ANI***



Amit Shah dials CMs to ensure Pakistanis leave

NEW DELHI, 25 MARCH

Union Home Minster Amit Shah reportedly called all the Chief Ministers and asked them to ensure that no Pakistan nationals stay in the country beyond the deadline. He reportedly asked the governments to identify every one

Several states complied with the request. Goa revoked visas of three Pakistan nationals while the Pune district administration ordered 111 Pakistan nationals to leave by tomorrow. Telangana identified at least 200 Pakistan nationals, of which 190 had long term visas and Odisha at least four.

191 Pakistani nationals returned home through the Attari-Wagah in Punjab's Amritsar. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

UN chief urges India, Pak to show restraint

UNITED NATIONS, 25 APRIL

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appealed to both India and Pakistan to exercise maximum restraint and ensure no further deterioration, his spokesperson said.

"We were very clear in our condemnation of the terror attack," Stephane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General, said at the daily press briefing on Thursday.

He said Guterres has not had any direct contact, "but I can tell you he's obviously following the situation very closely and with very great concern."

The secretary-general appeals to both the governments of India and Pakistan to "exercise maximum restraint and to ensure that the situation and the developments do not deteriorate any further.

Antonio Guterres
PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

"Any issues between Pakistan and India, we believe can be and should be resolved peacefully, through meaningful, mutual engagement," Dujarric said.

On India's decision to suspend the Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan, Dujarric said "I think this would go under the rubric of us appealing for maximum restraint and not increase tensions in a tense area."

Meanwhile, at another event hosted by India's Permanent Mission to the UN, President of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly Philemon Yang said, "I wish to convey my sincere condolences to the families of the victims in Jammu and Kashmir." *—PTI*

IRAN OFFERS HELP IN MENDING INDIA-PAKISTAN TIES

TEHRAN, 25 APRIL

Iran on Friday offered its help in mending relations between India and Pakistan, amid flared tensions after the Pahalgam terror attack. Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi said Tehran stands ready to use its good offices in Islamabad and New Delhi to "forge greater understanding at this difficult time."

Agarchi had condemned the Pahalgam attack "strongly and unequivocally" two days ago.

In a post on X, Araghchi drew attention to how India and Pakistan are "brotherly neighbours" of Iran, enjoying relations rooted in centuries-old cultural and civilizational ties and how, like other neighbours, Iran considers the two of them as "our foremost priority." *—PTI*

'NOT INVOLVED IN PAHALGAM'

Been doing West's dirty work training terrorists for decades: Pak

LONDON, 25 APRIL

Pakistan Defence Minister Khwaja Asif admitted the country's history of supporting, training and funding terrorist organisations as "dirty work" for the West, a mistake for which he said Pakistan had suffered.

In an interview with Sky News aired overnight, news presenter Yalda Hakim questioned Asif on Pakistan's response and stance on terrorism.

"You do admit, sir, that Pakistan has had a long history of backing and supporting and training and funding these terrorist organisations," Hakim asked.

"Well, we have been doing this dirty work for the United States for about three decades, you know, and the West, including Britain," replied Asif.

"That was a mistake, and we suffered from that, and that is why you are saying this to me. If we had not joined the war against the Soviet Union and later on the war after 9/11, Pakistan's track record... was an unimpeachable track record," he said, adding that Pakistan was "used as proxies" at the time.

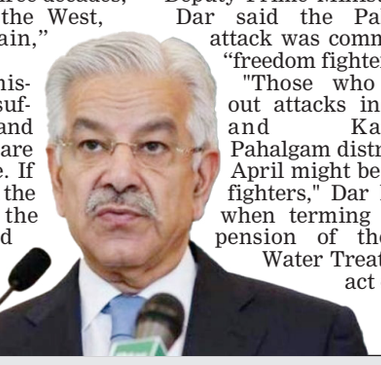
However, he denied that the Pahalgam terror attack was birthed in Pakistan.

"Lashkar-e-Taiba doesn't exist in Pakistan anymore. It is extinct. It is extinct... if the parent organisation does not exist, how can the offshoot take birth here," said Asif.

Asked if Pakistan fears an escalation from India, the minister, "We will measure our response to whatever is initiated by India, according to that. It would be a measured response, if there is an all-out attack or something like that, then obviously there will be an all-out war," he said.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar said the Pahalagam attack was committed by "freedom fighters".

"Those who carried out attacks in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam district on 22 April might be freedom fighters," Dar had said when terming the suspension of the Indus Water Treaty as "an act of war". *—PTI*



MEDHA PATKAR ARRESTED; RELEASED 7 HOURS LATER

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

Delhi police released social activist Medha Patkar from its custody seven hours after her arrest on Friday in connection with a 24-year-old defamation case filed by Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena, officials said.

Earlier in the day, Patkar was arrested by Delhi police, two days after a city court issued a non-bailable warrant against her for not furnishing probation bonds in the case.

She was released at around 4.30pm after she deposited a bail bond of Rs 1 lakh, which was accepted by the court.

If there is any recalcitrant behaviour on her part, she will have to serve the five-month sentence. *– PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

SC raps Rahul for 'irresponsible' remarks on Savarkar, stays HC order

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Friday censured Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for "irresponsible" remarks on Vinayak Damodar Savarkar at a rally in Maharashtra but stayed the criminal proceedings against him.

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Manmohan said, "Let's not mock our freedom fighters."

The bench asked senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Gandhi, "Mahatma Gandhi also used 'your faithful servant' while addressing the viceroy? Can Mahatma Gandhi be called a 'servant of Britishers' merely because he addressed himself to the viceroy as 'your servant'. In those days our judges of the Calcutta High Court used to address Chief Justice as writing 'your servant'."

"Any further statement by him (Gandhi) will be taken up suo motu. No more words on our freedom fighter," the bench warned.

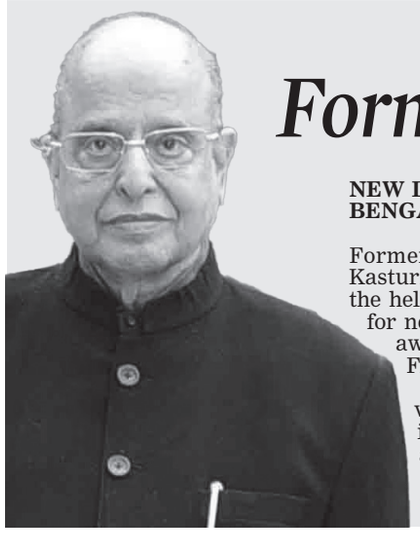
The top court then issued notice to Uttar Pradesh government and complainant advocate Nripendra Pandey and stayed an Allahabad High Court order which refused to quash trial court's summons against Gandhi.

The bench remarked, "This is not how you treat freedom fighters...when you don't know anything about the history of India, you should not make any such comments."

The case stems from the Gandhi's comments in 17 November, 2022, during his Bharat Jodo Yatra. *—PTI*

A VISIONARY & REFORMER

Former ISRO chief K Kasturirangan passes away in Bengaluru



NEW DELHI/ BENGALURU, 25 APRIL

Former ISRO chief K Kasturirangan, who was at the helm of the space agency for nearly a decade, passed away in Bengaluru on Friday, officials said.

He was 84 and is survived by two sons, family sources said, and added that he was suffering from age-related ailments for the past few months. "He left for heavenly abode this morning at his residence in Bengaluru. His body will be kept at Raman Research Institute (RRI) for paying last respects on 27 April," the officials said.

Kasturirangan steered the Indian space programme gloriously for more than nine years as the Chief of the ISRO, Head of the Space Commission and Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Space, before laying down his office on 27 August, 2003.

He was the project director for India's first two experimental earth observation satellites -- BHASKARA-I and II -- and subsequently, was also responsible for the overall direction of the first operational Indian remote-sensing satellite, IRS-1A.

He is credited with the successful launch and operationalisation of India's prestigious launch vehicle, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), and the first successful flight testing of the all-important Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle.

Kasturirangan got his bachelor's and master's degree in physics from the Bombay University and PhD in experimental high-energy astronomy while working at the Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad, in 1971.

Kasturirangan made extensive and significant contributions to the studies of cosmic X-ray and gamma-ray sources and the effect of cosmic X-rays in the lower atmosphere.

After being associated with the ISRO for nearly 35 years -- and heading it from 1994 to 2003 -- Kasturirangan served as a Rajya Sabha MP from 2003 to 2009 and concurrently, as the director of the National Institute of Advanced Studies.

Under the former UPA government, he was a member of the Planning Commission from 2009 to 2014. He also headed the Karnataka Knowledge Commission in 2008.

The current NDA government gave Kasturirangan the reins of a nine-member committee tasked with drafting the ambitious National Education Policy (NEP) in 2017.

He is a recipient of three major civilian awards -- Padma Shri (1982), Padma Bhushan (1992) and Padma Vibhushan (2000). *—PTI*

Man booked in M'luru over social media post

MANGALURU, 25 APRIL

A case has been registered against a man for a provocative Facebook post related to the recent terror attack in Pahalgam, which allegedly aimed to disturb public peace, police said on Friday. The complaint, filed by Satish Kumar, a resident of Ullalthi in Ullal Taluk, includes screenshots of the post and the user profile of the account named "Nichu Mangaluru," they said. A case has been registered under Sections 192 (wantonly giving provocation with intent to cause riot) and 353(1)(b) (whoever makes, publishes, or circulates any statement, false information, rumour, or report, including through electronic means) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita at Konaje Station. *—PTI*

2 siblings found dead in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 25 APRIL

Two siblings were discovered dead at a farmhouse in Kempalinganahalli on Thursday evening, with initial reports suggesting a potential suicide pact. The deceased have been named as 27-year-old Ramya, a practising advocate from Srinivaspura, and her 22-year-old foster brother, Puneeth, who had lived with Ramya's family since childhood. According to police officials, Puneeth found Ramya hanging from the ceiling upon returning to the farmhouse. In a state of shock, he messaged some of Ramya's relatives before also being found hanging in the same location. The exact circumstances surrounding Ramya's suicide remain unclear, and as of now, no suicide note has been discovered. Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support *—Salar News*

Errant driver gets 42-month jail for 2010 tragedy

MYSURU, 25 APRIL

FThe 11th Chief Judicial Magistrate and JMFC Court of Mysuru has awarded three-and-a-half-year imprisonment to a tempo driver for culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

According to reports, the court convicted tempo driver Chintankumar of Srirangapatna was at the wheel when 31 persons including a few women and four children, who were travelling in his tempo, drowned in Undabatti Lake off 766 National Highway near Mysuru Airport on 12 December 2010. The tempo was carrying 40 passengers as against the stipulated 20 passengers and was travelling from Nanjangud to Mysore when the tragedy occurred. The owner of the tempo Sanjeev Kumar of Palahalli village of Srirangapatna taluk was sentenced to one year imprisonment and a penalty of Rs 10,000 *—Salar News*

City cops arrest burglary suspects in Goa

BENGALURU, 25 APRIL

The Yelahanka Sub-Division Police have apprehended three suspects involved in a series of house burglaries, including the main accused who escaped to Goa after committing the crimes "for fun and leisure." The individuals were found with 213 grams of gold jewellery valued at Rs 18.10 lakh. The chief suspect, 27-year-old Shivakumar from Ballari district, has a criminal record, with 17 cases in Karnataka. Previously employed at a brick factory in Hesaraghatta. His accomplices, Shivanagappa and Sudarshan, were also taken into custody. Shivakumar broke into a locked house on Ramagondanahalli Main Road on 12 March, stealing 45 grams of gold and Rs 6 lakh cash. He and his aide then fled to Goa. Upon receiving a complaint from the homeowner, cops arrested two suspects in Vijayanagara district. Their testimonies resulted in Shivakumar's arrest in Ballari. *—Salar News*

Blueprint for Cauvery aarti will be ready in a week: DKS

State govt plans to start the programme this Dasara

MANDYA, 25 APRIL

A blueprint for the Cauvery aarti programme would be ready within a week, with plans to start it this Dasara, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said on Friday.

Addressing a press conference after a meeting with elected representatives and officials, he said, "We have formed a committee, led by Minister Chaluvaraya Swamy, to work out the modalities. This will prepare the blueprint in the next 8-10 days."

"The committee includes members from Chescom, the Tourism department, the Muzrai department, two DCs, two local MLAs, MLCs, Zilla Panchayat CEOs, and BWSSB members," he added.

Cauvery Aarti (Puja) is part of the Karnataka government's efforts to promote water conservation. The dates have not been announced yet.

The State government has decided to allocate Rs 92 crore for the Cauvery aart *PHOTO: PTI*

The State government has decided to allocate Rs 92 crore for the Cauvery aarti, with contributions from other departments as well.

"We are creating seating for about 10,000 people. The committee will decide how many days the aarti will be held," he said.

The government has already called for tenders to upgrade Brindavan Gardens at the KRS (Krishna Raja Sagara Dam).

"We've also decided to form a Planning Authority with four panchayats," he added.

Shivakumar said that seven firms have come forward to develop Brindavan Gardens.

Responding to a question about the launch, he said, "I'm keen to launch it this Dasara, and we've formed a committee to prepare the blueprint."

About the location, he said, "We've inspected potential sites... The location must be close to water, with sufficient space for parking, seating, and accommodations for artists. Boating will also be included."

"There will be both paid and free entry options. We can't deny entry to poor people, and there will be an option for the public to offer prayers."

On allegations that the aarti could harm the KRS dam, he said, "We will discuss this with the organisations opposing it. They may have doubts, and we'll address them." *—PTI*

JUSTICE FOR PAHALGAM

Former minister R Roshan Baig with members of the Muslim community protests against the killings at Pahalgam in Kashmir, at Mathikere in Bengaluru on Friday. This took place after the Friday prayers at Masjid-E-Taha *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

CHEATING CASE

ED raids properties linked to Cong MLA Kulkarni

BENGALURU, 25 APRIL

The Enforcement Directorate on Friday raided premises linked to Congress MLA Vinay Kulkarni in Karnataka amid allegations linking him to a woman accused of "cheating" a jeweller to the tune of crores of rupees.

Addressing reporters here, Kulkarni said the ED is probing a case against him and alleged that he was being harassed by the agency for the past one month.

"There should be some limit to troubling a person. It pains me to see people misusing the power they have... They want to finish me off politically and cut me off from people," he said.

To a question whether there had been any financial dealings between him and alleged con woman Aishwarya Gowda, he denied it and said if it existed then it can be traced easily.

Criticising the ED action, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah called it "political vendetta".

"The ED raids are the outcome of politics of vengeance. Centre carries out these kind of raids," he told media in Chamarajanagar. He sought to know why the ED never raided properties owned by BJP leaders. "Are the BJP leaders upright?" he asked.

He accused central investigating agencies of targeting only non-BJP leaders. *—PTI*

METRO ADJUSTS TIMINGS FOR TCS MARATHON

BENGALURU, 25 APRIL

In a supportive gesture for participants of the upcoming TCS World 10K – 2025 Marathon, the Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) has announced earlier metro train services on Sunday, 27 April.

As per the official notification, metro operations will begin at 3.30am, a significant three-and-a-half hours ahead of the usual Sunday start time of 7.00am. This change will affect all four terminal stations as well as Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Station at Majestic. Trains will run at a 12-minute frequency to facilitate smooth and timely transport for marathon runners, volunteers, and spectators. *—Salar News*

'SAID IT DURING PULWAMA TOO'

CM mocks PM's vow to 'track and punish' terrorists

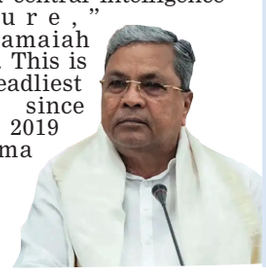
CHAMARAJANAGAR, 25 APRIL

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement that India would identify, track, and punish every terrorist and their backers responsible for the Pahalgam attack "beyond their imagination".

Siddaramaiah pointed out that Modi had made a similar statement after the 2019 Pulwama terror attack, which killed over 40 soldiers.

"This happened even after he made the same statement in 2019. What did he say after the Pulwama terror attack? After that statement, 27 people were killed in Pahalgam by terrorists. He had then said he would wipe out terrorism. What happened?" Siddaramaiah said. He said he had no information about what transpired at the all-party meeting held on Thursday in New Delhi. "There were a lot of people around me, and I couldn't follow it properly."

"It's a central intelligence failure," Siddaramaiah alleged. This is the deadliest attack since the 2019 Pulwama strike. *—PTI*



C'NAGAR IS LUCKY FOR ME: SIDDARAMAIAH

Amidst the ongoing power tussle in the Congress, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, on Friday, indicated that he will continue in his post. Mocking the so-called 'Chamarajanagar jinx,' according to which a sitting CM will lose power if s/he visits the town, Siddaramaiah told reporters, "I have visited Chamarajanagar around 20 times and I am serving as the Chief Minister for the second time". The belief that visiting Chamarajanagar town leads to one losing power is far from truth. Such superstitions are detrimental to a society's progress, he stated.Speaking to reporters atop the MM Hills, he said he has told authorities to prepare quality laddus like those being prepared in Tirupati, and sell them at Rs 35 per piece. Earlier, the CM offered special puja to the silver chariot at MM Hills temple along with Social Welfare Minister H C Mahadevappa *—Salar News*

RANYA RAO FACES YEAR-LONG DETENTION

BENGALURU, 25 APRIL

In a significant development in a high-profile gold smuggling case, Sandalwood actress Ranya Rao and her two alleged accomplices, Tarun Koduru Raju and Sahil Sakariya Jain, are to be placed under preventive detention for up to one year under the stringent Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act, 1974 (COFEPOSA).

Rao is involved in smuggling approximately 100kg of gold into India from overseas. Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) submitted a proposal to Central Economic Intelligence Bureau (CEIB), the nodal agency empowered to invoke COFEPOSA.

Rao, also known as Harshavardhini, was intercepted at the airport on 3 March, with officials seizing 14.8kg gold valued at Rs 12.56 crore concealed in her luggage. She had made 30 trips to Dubai over the past year, raising suspicions of her involvement in an international smuggling network.

The actress, along with her accomplices, is expected to be held at Parappana Agrahara Central Prison in Bengaluru. Authorities say the accused could resume smuggling operations and evade justice if released on bail. *—Salar News*

BJP MLC slams 'costly' special cabinet meeting

MYSURU, 25 APRIL

Former minister and BJP MLC H Vishwanath has condemned the Karnataka government for its extravagant spending during a special cabinet meeting held by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah at M M Hills.

Speaking at a press conference at the Jaladarshini guest house, Vishwanath claimed that the event wasted government funds, with considerable amounts spent and a large police presence deployed.

He noted that previous chief ministers, including SM. Krishna and BS. Yediyurappa, conducted similar meetings but saw no tangible results. Vishwanath also opposed the government's plan to hold a Cauvery Arathi event at the Krishnaraja Sagar Reservoir, allocating Rs 93 crore annually, asserting that such events primarily benefit officials seeking to exploit government funds.

Moreover, he expressed his disapproval of the proposed Rs 390 crore expenditure for white-topping city roads, suggesting that it would only facilitate misappropriation of funds by local legislators. However, he welcomed the government's decision to allocate 26 acres near Huyilalulu village for an international cricket stadium, highlighting its potential to promote sports and tourism. *—Salar News*

Expect pre-monsoon showers this weekend

BENGALURU, 25 APRIL

Residents can anticipate ongoing pre-monsoon showers, along with thunderstorms and lightning, from 28-30 April, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). While the rainfall will not be widespread, it is expected to be scattered and moderate, frequently accompanied by gusty winds and localised thunderstorms.

In a statement to reporters on Friday, CS Patil, Director of the IMD's Bengaluru regional centre, explained that a trough has formed at approximately 0.9 km altitude over the state's interior, leading to a partly cloudy atmosphere and evening or night rainfall in numerous locations.

Since early April, Karnataka has experienced above-average pre-monsoon rainfall, providing a much-needed boost to agricultural activities. Intermittent summer showers have been reported throughout various districts, particularly in the coastal, Malnad, and northern and southern interior regions.

Patil said rainfall is likely to continue in these areas till April end, with wind speeds potentially reaching 40 to 50 km/h in some locations. The IMD has advised the public to exercise caution.*—Salar News*

Ricky shot himself to set up stepmom: Ex-gunman

BENGALURU, 25 APRIL

A dramatic turn has emerged in the case surrounding the alleged armed attack on Ricky Rai, the son of deceased underworld figure Muthappa Rai. The prime suspect, Vittal Monappa, a former gunman for Muthappa and briefly employed by Ricky, has claimed during police interrogation that Ricky shot himself.

Monappa was arrested by Bidadi Police on suspicion of involvement in the shooting incident on 18 April, in which Ricky sustained injuries to his nose and arm while travelling towards Bengaluru late at night. However, his recent confession raises serious questions about the initial narrative of a premeditated attack.

Police sources reveal that Monappa, who has been remanded to 10 days of custody by a Ramanagara court, suggested that the so-called "shootout" may have been fabricated. A bullet retrieved from the scene has been matched through forensic checks to the firearm in Monappa's possession, which has now been sent to a forensic lab for further analysis.

Investigators are also exploring the potential of a property dispute as a motive. It is alleged that Monappa was promised a residential plot by Muthappa Rai before his passing, a promise that Ricky reportedly refused to honour, intensifying the motive for conflict.

Additionally, three individuals named in Ricky's complaint—Rakesh Malli, Nitesh Shetty, and Anuradha, Muthappa Rai's second wife—have been interrogated, though no evidence has surfaced against them to date, with Anuradha currently abroad. *—Salar News*

FOR QUALITY LEARNING

NEET mandatory for physio courses

BENGALURU, 25 APRIL

Admissions to physiotherapy courses will now come under the purview of NEET, aligning with the national move towards standardised medical education, Karnataka Minister for Medical Education and Skill Development Sharan Prakash Patil announced on Friday.

Additionally, the course duration has been extended to five years to enable competency-based learning and deeper clinical exposure, he said.

Speaking at the inauguration of Karnataka Physiocon-25, an international conference on physiotherapy held here, Patil expressed the state government's support for including physiotherapy course admissions under the ambit of NEET.

"We welcome the integration of physiotherapy courses under NEET, which will enhance academic quality and professional standards," he said in a statement.

Addressing over 10,000 students at the event, Patil highlighted the pivotal role physiotherapists play across the healthcare spectrum — from childbirth to elderly care.

Physiotherapy course duration has been extended to five years to enable competency-based learning *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

"Physiotherapists today contribute significantly to neuro and orthopaedic rehab, cardiopulmonary care, paediatrics, disability support, sports medicine, fitness, and community-based care," he noted.

He also detailed the state's plans to introduce physiotherapy courses in more government colleges to meet the growing domestic and international demand for trained professionals.

Present at the event, Yagna Shukla, Chairperson of the National Commission for Allied and Health Professionals, said the commission was planning to introduce the One Nation, One Curriculum initiative in physiotherapy education. She said the curriculum reforms would set a golden standard and elevate the profession, offering far-reaching benefits for students and practitioners alike.

The conference saw participation from global experts, with speakers from Israel, Australia, and Nepal, alongside 50 national experts sharing insights with delegates. Over 800 research papers were presented during the event, making it one of the largest platforms for physiotherapy professionals in the region. *—PTI*

NIA raids many states in Pak arms smuggling

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

The NIA has conducted extensive searches at multiple locations across Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and other states in a case linked to Pakistan-backed cross-border smuggling of arms and narcotics by Khalistani operatives, the agency said Friday. Several electronic devices and other incriminating materials were recovered during the searches, conducted on Thursday at 18 locations in Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Karnataka, a statement by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) said. NIA teams are examining the seized items to unravel the entire conspiracy behind the smuggling and the radicalisation of individuals in Punjab, J&K and other parts of India. *—PTI*

Deora slams Sena UBT MPs' absence at J&K attack meet

MUMBAI, 25 APRIL

Shiv Sena MP Milind Deora on Friday targeted the Shiv Sena (UBT) over the absence of its legislators at the all-party meeting the Centre convened on the Pahalgam terror attack, saying it was shameful but expected. Taking to X, Deora said, "Shameful but expected, not a single UBT MP turned up for the all-party meeting on the #Pahalgam terror attack. When the nation needs one voice on security, those who bark into mics daily suddenly fall silent." Sena (UBT) MP Arvind Sawant wrote to Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, informing him about his and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Raut's inability to attend the meeting. He said both of them had been on an official tour as members of parliamentary committees. Sawant also shared the text of his communication with Rijiju and later provided a revised version. *—PTI*

NCW terms West Bengal govt 'a mute spectator'

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

The National Commission for Women (NCW) on Friday said there is a "complete breakdown" of administrative machinery and governance in West Bengal's Murshidabad district, calling the scale of trauma as "severe and long-lasting" for the women in the area. Three people were killed in the violence that took place in in Murshidabad district on 11 April and 12 during protests against the Waqf Bill. The NCW noted that many displaced women now face increased vulnerability and loss of dignity in the absence of state support. "The porous border with Bangladesh, combined with poor administrative vigilance, has worsened the situation, and the presence of radical religious elements in the area cannot be ruled out," the NCW said. It termed West Bengal government "a mute spectator", allowing the situation to spiral into chaos. *—PTI*

Andhra CM invites PM to Amaravati inauguration

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday to extend an invitation for the groundbreaking ceremony of the revamped Rs 65,000-crore Amaravati capital city project, scheduled for 2 May. During their brief discussion, Naidu also addressed the tragic terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir, which claimed 26 lives, including that of two Andhra residents: software engineer S Madhusudhan Rao and retired bank employee JS Chandramouli. Naidu has revived the Amaravati city project, intended as the new capital of Andhra Pradesh along the Krishna River, after resuming office in 2024; the initiative had been stalled between 2019 and 2024. The ambitious plan seeks to create a modern urban hub inspired by global cities like Amsterdam, Singapore, and Tokyo. *—PTI*

Shah urges CMs to ensure no Pakistani stays after deadline

Omar calls Indus Water Treaty 'most unfair' to the people

Amit Shah **PHOTO: PTI**

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah called up all the Chief Ministers and urged them to ensure that no Pakistani stays in India beyond the deadline set for leaving the country on Friday, sources said.

India on Thursday announced revoking all visas issued to Pakistani nationals from 27 April and advised Indian nationals residing in Pakistan to return home at the earliest. Chief Ministers were also told to identify Pakistani nationals staying in their respective areas and ensure their deportation, sources said. The revocation of visas however does not apply to the long-term visas already issued to Hindu Pakistani nationals, which "remain valid".

- India on Thursday announced revoking all visas issued to Pakistani nationals from 27 April and advised Indian nationals residing in Pakistan to return home at the earliest.

Shah is also set to hold a key meeting to discuss the future course of action on the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) of 1960 with Pakistan, which has been kept in abeyance, sources said. Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Paatil and senior officials of several ministries will take part in the meeting, sources said.

Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said the IWT was the "most unfair document" to the people.

"Government of India has taken some steps. As far as Jammu and Kashmir is concerned, let's be honest we have never been in favour of the Indus Water Treaty," Abdullah told reporters after a meeting with various tourism, trade and industry bodies. "Now what the medium to long-term implications to this are, that is something we have to wait to see," he added.*—PTI*

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah during a meeting, in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

India will stand united against terror: RaGa

SRINAGAR, 25 APRIL

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi Friday said the idea behind the Pahalgam terror attack was to divide the people of the country. He said it was imperative that India stood united to defeat terrorism once and for all.

"It is a terrible tragedy and I came here to get a sense of what is going on and to help. The entire people of Jammu and Kashmir have condemned this terrible act. They have fully supported the nation," Gandhi told reporters here.

The Congress leader, who arrived Friday morning, visited Army's 92 Base hospital at Badamibagh Cantonment to inquire about the injured.

"My love and affection to everybody who has lost family members. I want everybody to know that whole nation stands together as one," he said.

Referring to an all-party meeting that took place in Delhi on Thursday, he asserted that a united Opposition condemned terror attack and stands behind government.

"The idea behind what has happened is to divide society, is to make brother fight brother and it is very important that every single Indian stands united, stands together so that we can defeat what the terrorists were trying to do," Gandhi said.

Congress leader also met JK Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and assured them his party supports them.

On the alleged harassment of Kashmiris elsewhere in the country, Gandhi said, "It is sad to see that some people are attacking my brothers and sisters from Kashmir ... I think it is very important that all of us stand together, stand united and fight this nasty action that has been taken and defeat terrorism once and for all."*—PTI*

2 FAWAD KHAN SONGS REMOVED FROM YOUTUBE

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

Two songs of 'AbirGulaal', featuring Pakistani actor Fawad Khan, are no longer available on YouTube.

Fawad's comeback movie, which also stars Vaani Kapoor, has landed in a controversy in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack.

The official videos of the songs 'KhudayaIshq' and Angreji Rangrasiya' which were released on social media last week, are no longer available for viewing on YouTube.

While 'KhudayaIshq' been sung by Arijit Singh and Shilpa Rao, Angreji Rangrasiya' is a foot-tapping number from singer-composer Amit Trived.

'Abir Gulaal' is produced by A Richer Lens Entertainment in collaboration with Indian Stories Production and Aarjay Pictures. The film's producers and Saregama were unavailable for comment.

Government sources said the movie would not be allowed to release in Indian theatres on 9 May amid growing calls for its ban.

The Federation of Western India Cine Employees reiterated its directive to ban Pakistani artists.

The industry workers' union warned of disciplinary action against those working with Pakistani artists.

The film also features Lisa Haydon, Riddhi Dogra, Farida Jalal, Soni Razdan and Parmeet Sethi in pivotal roles. *—PTI*

'Bring my son home': Family of detained BSF

HOOGHLY, 25 APRIL

In the narrow lanes of Rishra's neighbourhood, the modest home of BSF jawan Purnam Sahu, detained by Pakistan Rangers, echoes with silent prayers and tearful appeals as his distraught family clings to hope and each other.

"He was serving the nation, and now we don't even know whether he is safe or not. We have heard that he is in Pakistani custody," said Bholanath Sahu, the jawan's father, as neighbours gathered to offer quiet words of solidarity and television crews waited outside.

He said, "I just want to know where my son is. Is he safe? Is he okay?" Purnam, posted with the BSF's 182nd battalion in Punjab's Ferozepur sector, on 23 April had escorted a group of farmers near the border and stepped away to rest under a tree, unknowingly slipping into Pakistani territory. Pakistan Rangers soon took him into custody.

The Indian and Pakistani border forces held a flag meeting to negotiate Sahu's release, officials confirmed.

He had returned to duty from leave three weeks ago. In their cramped two-room home, Purnam's wife Rajani sat speechless.

She had last spoken to him on the day before he was detained.

Their seven-year-old son, who kept asking about his father, was unaware of the magnitude of the situation.

It was Purnam's colleagues who informed the family about the incident.

The timing of the incident has further intensified tensions between the two countries. *—PTI*

AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam being arrested on sedition charges for allegedly defending Pakistan, in Nagaon, Assam **PHOTO: PTI**

10 arrested for Pahalgam remarks

GUWAHATI/ KASARAGOD/ SHILLONG 25 APRIL

Eight people, including AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam, have been arrested across Assam for their alleged pro-Pakistan stand following the terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Friday. They were arrested for directly or indirectly promoting the cause of Pakistan on social media.

Besides, a leader of Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) in Kerala, an Assam University student and a 30-year-old man in Meghalaya were all booked for allegedly inflammatory remarks.

The student and the Meghalaya man were held over social media posts while the IUML leader Basheer Vellikkoth was booked for his remarks on a TV channel.

The complainant on 23 April claimed Vellikkoth remarks could result in causing a riot.

In a later post, the student tendered his apology. *—PTI*

DELHI MARKETS SHUT DOWN IN PROTEST

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

Several of Delhi's busiest commercial hubs, including Connaught Place, Sadar Bazar and Chandni Chowk, were bereft of their usual hubbub on Friday as over 900 markets observed a 'Delhi Bandh' in protest against the recent terror attack in Pahalgam. Shops across key sectors such as textiles, spices, utensils, and bullion remained shut. According to the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), more than 8 lakh shops across the capital participated in the bandh, leading to an estimated trade loss of around Rs 1,500 crore for the day. The bandh was called by the Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI), which had earlier held a candle march in Connaught Place to condemn the attack. *—PTI*

Pakistan's flag missing from the table at Raj Bhawan on which the July 1972 Simla Agreement was signed, in Shimla **PHOTO: PTI**

Pak flag missing from Raj Bhawan's table

SHIMLA, 25 APRIL

The Pakistani flag on the historic table at Raj Bhawan, on which the Simla Accord was signed, was conspicuous by its absence on Friday morning, a day after Pakistan suspended the agreement signed in 1972.

Suspension of Simla Accord by Pakistan was in response to retaliatory actions taken by India in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir.

The pact was signed by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistan President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The agreement stressed on settling all contentious issues bilaterally and maintaining peace at the Line of Control.

India also agreed to release 90,000 prisoners of war along with returning 13,000 square km of land to Pakistan.

The wooden table on which the agreement was signed is kept in the Himachal Pradesh Raj Bhavan's Kirti Hall on an elevated red-coloured platform cordoned off with brass railings with a plate which reads -- "Simla Agreement was signed here on 3-7-1972".

A photograph of Bhutto alongside Gandhi adorns table, while several other photographs of the 1972 India-Pakistan Summit hang on the wall. Raj Bhavan officials confirmed that the flag "is not on the table." *—PTI*

Delhi court refuses to give notice to Sonia, RaGa

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

A Delhi court on Friday refused to issue notice to Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi and others in the National Herald money laundering case for now,

Special judge Vishal Gogne was acting on a plea of the Enforcement Directorate (ED), which claimed cognisance of the complaint (ED's equivalent to a chargesheet) cannot be taken without hearing the accused according to the new provisions of law.

"Don't want this order to be prolonged. Let notice be issued," ED told the court.

The judge said before the court is satisfied that notice is required, it couldn't "pass such an order". Before court passes any order, it has to see if there is any deficiency, the judge added.

"There are certain documents missing in the chargesheet as highlighted by the Ahlmad. ED is directed to file those documents. After that the court will decide the issue of notice," the court said.

"It was very transparent. Not hiding anything. Giving chance to them to come and give their point before cognisance is taken," the ED told the court. The judge posted the matter on 2 May *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

- The judge said before the court is satisfied that notice is required, it couldn't "pass such an order". It has to see if there is any deficiency, the judge added.

'USED POLICE FORCE'

TN CM didn't allow VCs at conference: Guv

CHENNAI, 25 APRIL

Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi on Friday alleged that Chief Minister MK Stalin used police to deter vice-chancellors of state universities from participating in the pre-scheduled conference at Udhagamandalam Raj Bhavan in Nilgiris district and claimed that the action was reminiscent of the emergency days.

When telephonic threats from state Higher Education Minister, Govi Chezhiaan asking the V-Cs not to partake in the conference did not work Stalin used the police to threaten them with dire consequences, Ravi alleged.

Lashing out at the governor, Chezhiaan said the Narendra Modi government, which said that politicians should not be appointed as governors, was doing politics through the governors. He accused Ravi of playing politics despite the Supreme Court ruling in favour of the state government on the ten bills re-adopted by the state Assembly.

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar at the inauguration of the Vice Chancellors conference in Tamil Nadu, in Udhagamandalam, along with Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi, on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

One V-C was taken to a police station, while police officials knocked on the doors of the hotel rooms in Udhagamandalam where others had checked in, Ravi said on X. He claimed that the police told them that they would be allowed to return home only if they did not attend the conference.

He said in the post "Don't V-Cs have academic freedom to attend an academic conference within the state? Or is CM Stalin afraid of consequences of rise in standards of state universities which largely caters to Dalit and poor students and any quality improvement will make them aspirational and inspirational that could be a threat to his political future?"

"Aware of the Supreme Court verdict, the Vice Chancellors boycotted the conference. How is the state government responsible for this?" Chezhiaan sought to know.

The minister sarcastically remarked that Ravi could have taken the post of president of BJP's Tamil Nadu unit if he wanted to indulge in politics. *—PTI*

Five workers die in UP after inhaling smoke

BAHRAICH, 25 APRIL

Five workers died allegedly after inhaling smoke emanating from a dryer machine that malfunctioned at a rice mill in Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh on Friday, officials said. Three other workers, who fainted after inhaling the smoke, were rushed to the district hospital. District Magistrate Monika Rani said that the workers were drying paddy when the dryer began emitting smoke. Preliminary findings indicate the dryer experienced a technical failure, resulting in smoke emission and subsequent suffocation. Vinod Agarwal, director of the Rajgarhia Rice Mill, stated that the fully automated dryer typically operates without smoke or fire. However, at around 5am, a worker noticed smoke and turned off the machine. *—PTI*

7-month-old falls to death from 21st floor in Palghar

PALGHAR, 25 APRIL

A seven-month-old boy tragically fell to his death from the 21st floor of a residential building in the Bolinj township of Virar, Maharashtra, on Friday. The incident occurred when the infant, held in his mother's arms, slipped from her grasp while she was closing a door near an open window. Despite being rushed to a nearby hospital, doctors declared the baby dead. The police have registered a case of accidental death, and an investigation is underway to determine the exact sequence of events. Eyewitnesses reported that the mother collapsed in distress, screaming for help, as family members and neighbours quickly gathered at the scene. This heartbreaking accident has left the family and community in shock and mourning. *—PTI*

Sanitation worker hangs self in Jaipur office

JAIPUR, 25 APRIL

A contractual sanitation worker allegedly died by suicide at Rajashtan's Jaipur Heritage Municipal Corporation office on Thursday evening. According to SHO Manak Chowk, Gurbhupendra Singh, the deceased, identified as Shyam, was found hanging from a ceiling fan in a hall inside the office premises. The incident was discovered when a staff member went to lock the hall and saw the body. Police recovered a suicide note at the scene, in which Shyam reportedly blamed an executive engineer for his death. A case has been registered against the official for abetment to suicide. Shyam's body has been sent to the hospital mortuary for a post-mortem examination. It will be handed over to his family thereafter. Investigations are ongoing to determine the exact circumstances leading to the incident. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Delhi warned of heatwave as capital hits 40°C

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

The weather department predicted a heatwave for New Delhi, with the minimum temperature at 21.6 and the maximum temperature at 40°C or higher. Humidity was recorded at 24 per cent at 8.30am. The Met Department defines a heatwave as a period when the maximum temperature reaches 40°C or higher in the plains, 37°C or more in coastal areas, and 30°C or higher in hilly regions. The maximum temperature is expected to reach around 42°C, according to the Met Office. Air quality was classified as 'poor', with the Air Quality Index (AQI) recorded at 239 at 9am. Residents are advised to stay hydrated, avoid strenuous outdoor activities, and take precautions against the heat and pollution. *—PTI*

Can't stall Waqf law made by Parl, Centre tells SC

Govt urges apex court to junk pleas against Waqf law change

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

The Centre on Friday sought the Supreme Court to dismiss the pleas challenging validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025. It said there cannot be a "blanket stay" on the law as there was a "presumption of its constitutionality".

In a 1,332-page preliminary counter affidavit, the government defended the contentious law saying that "shockingly" after 2013, there were an addition of over 20 lakh hectare (precisely 20,92,072.536) in Waqf land.

"Right before even Mughal era, pre-independence era and post-independence era, the total of Waqfs created was 18,29,163.896 acres of land in India," the affidavit said. It claimed "reported misuse" of earlier provisions to encroach upon private and government properties.

The affidavit was filed by Shersha C Shaik Mohiddin, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

"Settled position in law that constitutional courts would not stay a statutory provision, either directly or indirectly, and will decide the matter finally. There is a presumption of constitutionality that applies to laws made by Parliament," it added.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna is slated to hear the matter on 5 May PHOTO: PTI

The Centre went on, "While this court would examine these challenges when the cases are heard, a blanket stay (or a partial stay) without being aware of the adverse consequences of such an order in a generality of cases (even on members of the Muslim community itself) were the petitions to be unsuccessful would be uncalled for, especially in the context of the presumption of validity of such laws."

The affidavit claimed the pleas challenging the Act proceeded on false premise that Amendment takes away fundamental rights of religious freedom.

"Parliament has acted within its domain to ensure that religious endowments like Waqf are managed in a manner that upholds the trust reposed in them by the faithful and the society at large, without trespassing on religious autonomy," it said.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna is slated to hear the matter on 5 May. *—PTI*

SC LOOKS INTO PENSION FOR STEPMOTHERS

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

The Supreme Court has said it will examine whether a stepmother can be considered for family pension under the Indian Air Force rules, saying "mother is a very wide term".

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh questioned the Indian Air Force's (IAF) decision to deny family pension to a woman, who raised her stepson since the age of six and said the regulations are not constitutional mandates.

"'Mother' is a very wide term," Justice Surya Kant said, "If a baby is born and the biological mother passes away and the father marries again... The stepmother, right from the time when the child requires breastfeeding, brings it up, and then it becomes an army officer – air force or navy. If she has really looked after that child, is she not his mother?" The court asked while hearing a plea of Jayashree. *—PTI*

The landslides have affected critical routes connecting tourist destinations like Lachen, Lachung and Yumthang in North Sikkim PHOTO:PTI

Landslides strand 1,000 in N Sikkim

GANGTOK, 25 APRIL

Around 1,000 tourists were stranded in North Sikkim after landslides struck the Himalayan state, police said. The region is experiencing continuous heavy rainfall, which has made the roads inaccessible.

The police said that massive landslides have occurred at Munshithang on the Lachen–Chungthang road and at Lema/Bob on the Lachung–Chungthang road.

The landslides have affected critical routes connecting tourist destinations like Lachen, Lachung, and Yumthang in North Sikkim, areas popular among visitors during the spring and summer seasons.

Around 200 tourist vehicles were stranded at Chungthang on Thursday, they said. Chungthang is nearly 100 km from the state capital Gangtok.

The situation was aggravated by continuous rain in the region.

The district administration has instructed all tour operators not to send tourists to North Sikkim on Friday and until further notice, officials said. The authorities have cancelled all permits given to tourists for visiting the region.

Authorities have cautioned tourists and residents against attempting to travel on these routes due to the high risk of further landslides and road collapse. *—PTI/ANI*

HC relief to Medha in defamation case

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

In a relief to activist Medha Patkar, the Delhi High Court on Friday suspended her sentence in a defamation case filed by Delhi LG VK Saxena in which she was arrested and produced in a sessions court earlier in the day.

Saxena filed the case 23 years ago when he was heading an NGO in Gujarat.

On 2 April, a sessions court upheld Patkar's conviction in the defamation case but suspended her jail term and released her on "probation of good conduct". It directed her to furnish Rs 25,000 probation bond on 8 April and imposed a precondition of Rs 1 lakh fine.

Probation is a method of non-institutional treatment of offenders and a conditional suspension of sentence in which the offender, after conviction, is released on bond of good behaviour instead of being sent to prison.

However, a non-bailable warrant was issued against her after she failed to honour the conditions of probation on the prescribed date.

On Friday, Patkar was arrested and produced before

a sessions court following which the judge orally ordered her release subject to furnishing the bonds.

High court's Justice Shalinder Kaur, however, suspended the sentence and granted her bail on a personal bond of Rs 25,000.

The court posted her plea against her punishment in the case on 20 May.

Patkar withdrew her plea challenging her conviction earlier in the day and filed a fresh one.

The magisterial court on 1 July, 2024 sentenced her to five months' simple imprisonment and slapped a Rs 10 lakh fine after finding her guilty under IPC Section 500 (defamation). *— PTI*

Teachers who lost their jobs following a Supreme Court order protest in front of the West Bengal School Service Commission office in Kolkata on Tuesday PHOTO: PTI

Teachers stall stir in Kolkata

KOLKATA, 25 APRIL

Protesting teachers who had besieged the West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) headquarters for five days have decided to temporarily suspend their agitation following the release of a list of approximately 16,000 eligible candidates.

Dhritish Mondal, a leader of the Deserving Teachers Forum, announced the decision to withdraw the sit-in but confirmed that protests would continue at Sahid Minar in central Kolkata. "We are suspending the sit-in here to focus on preparing a review petition to the Supreme Court regarding the April 3 order that invalidated the jobs of around 26,000 teachers recruited through the 2016 SSC test," he stated.

Teachers are pressing for the inclusion of ten more names in the eligibility list, which SSC chairman Siddhartha Majumdar attributed to a technical error. "Although a list has been released, it is wise for teachers listed as eligible to return to schools for now; however, we will resume our protest during the summer vacation to demand reinstatement until the age of 60 and a complete list of eligible candidates," added a protesting teacher. The unrest escalated when teachers confined Majumdar to his office for over 40 hours, calling for the publication of OMR sheets and lists of untainted candidates. Following the Supreme Court's ruling on 3 April, around 25,753 teaching and non-teaching staff from state-aided schools lost their jobs due to significant irregularities in recruitment. *—PTI*

3 MP students allege rape, 2 arrested

BHOPAL, 25 APRIL

Three female students from a private college in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, have reportedly been raped and blackmailed by at least three men, according to police statements released on Friday.

Authorities have arrested two men in connection with the case, while a special investigation team (SIT) has been established to probe the incident further. Bhopal Commissioner of Police, HC Mishra, confirmed that efforts are ongoing to apprehend a third suspect who remains at large.

A report to the Bag Sewania police on 18 April revealed that the accused compelled the victim to introduce her friends, leading to similar assaults and blackmail against them. Police suspect that the number of the victims could rise as the inquiry continues. *—PTI*

Probe can go on without Kamra's arrest: Bombay HC

Kunal Kamra PHOTO: PTI

MUMBAI, 25 APRIL

The Bombay HC on Friday said the police investigation against Kunal Kamra can continue, but the comedian shall not be arrested.

While admitting Kamra's petition seeking the quashing of the FIR against him, a bench of Justices Sarang Kotwal and SM Modak said "larger" and "serious" issues related to restrictions on the freedom of speech should be considered.

The court said it was not inclined to grant a complete stay on the investigation into the case registered against the comedian at Khar police station. "Since notice is given to the petitioner (Kamra), the arrest is not necessary. The investigation can be continued without his arrest," it said.

The court noted that if the police file the chargesheet in the case during the pendency of the petition, the trial court shall not take cognisance of it. It further said that Kamra's statement could be recorded in Chennai, as the comedian was receiving death threats in Mumbai. Kamra is presently residing in Tamil Nadu.

The bench, in its order, noted that the petition raises larger issues of the fundamental right of freedom of speech as against the restrictions put on that right, which include the aspects of decency, morality and public order. *—PTI*

BJP WINS MAYORAL POLL; RAJA IQBAL TO BE THE NEW MAYOR OF DELHI

NEW DELHI, 25 APRL

BJP's Raja Iabal was elected Delhi's new mayor on Friday as the saffron party returned to power in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) after two years.

Iqbal defeated Congress candidate Mandeep Singh to grab the top civic body post. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) boycotted the mayoral election.

As Singh took his seat, BJP councillors filled the air with chants of Bharat Mata ki Jai.

Singh defeated Mandeep Singh (from Nangloi Ward 47) by securing 133 out of 142 votes. The BJP lost two votes due to the absence of MP Manoj Tiwari, while one vote was declared invalid. The Congress received a total of eight votes, while AAP had announced a boycott of the election on Monday.

"We will try to form the Standing Committee within a month and work in coordination with the Delhi government to ensure people face no problems. Our priorities include making parks greener, curbing corruption and pollution, and scrapping user charges immediately," Iqbal Singh said.

He said the party will "motivate" teachers, provide funds for students' uniforms, and improve school infrastructure. *—PTI*

FALSE PROMISES

Two Navy officers held for extorting Agniveer aspirants

BHUBANESWAR, 25 APRIL

Odisha police arrested three people, including two serving Navy personnel in Khurda district, for extorting money from Agniveer aspirants during a recruitment drive in November 2024, an officer said on Friday.

The arrested persons were Satyam Chahar, currently working at INS Kesari, Andaman and Nicobar, Vinay Kumar Ray, presently posted at INS Chilika and retired Navy official Bhoosan, a resident of Uttar Pradesh, the officer said.

The trio were arrested based on a complaint lodged by Lieutenant Commander Adwitiya Singh, a training correspondence officer at INS Chilka, on 19 April. The case was registered under charges of cheating and extortion.

PHOTO: PTI

Khurda SP Sagarika Nath, who is monitoring the case, said that the arrested trio was accused of extorting a huge amount of money from Agniveer aspirants by promising them assistance in police verification, physical examination, and securing a job.

"We have arrested three people and in search of two others allegedly involved in the scam," Nath told PTI, adding that the police have informed the Navy to verify whether any candidate fraudulently got recruited as Agniveer.

The SP said police have seized several transaction proofs and bank documents during the course of their investigation. "Preliminary investigation revealed that the accused had been collecting huge money from job seekers with false promises of getting them employment in the Navy."

"Police have so far frozen 12 bank accounts linked to the fraudulent activities," the SP said. *—PTI*

SUSPECTED IAF EJECT DAMAGES HOUSE IN MP

SHIVPURI, 25 APRIL

A heavy metal object, suspected to have fallen off an Indian Air Force (IAF) aircraft, has caused heavy damage to a house in Pichhore town of Madhya Pradesh on Friday, but there was no report of injuries, police said.

A heavy object fell on the roof of the house of Manoj Sagar, a teacher, around 11am, an eyewitness said.

Sagar was having food inside the house with his children and his wife was in the kitchen when the roof burst open with a loud explosion and an 8 to 10 feet deep pit was formed in the courtyard, they added.

"A heavy metal object fell from the sky from an Air Force jet on the house of Manoj Sagar...due to which two outer rooms have been damaged," said Shivpuri SP Aman Singh Rathor. *—PTI*

Why no FIR against Badlapur case cops: HC

MUMBAI, 25 APRIL

The Bombay High Court expressed its shock on Friday that the police had not registered an FIR against five officers involved in the custodial death of Akshay Shinde, a suspect in the Badlapur school sexual assault case, despite its explicit order. Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Neela Gokhale warned the Maharashtra government that it would initiate criminal contempt proceedings if the order was not complied with by the end of the day.

Akshay Shinde PHOTO: ANI

The court had previously ordered the formation of a special investigation team (SIT) to probe the case and mandated the transfer of all case documents to the SIT. It criticised the state's blatant disregard for its instructions, stating that the failure to register an FIR amounted to contempt. Shinde, who was accused of assaulting two young girls, was shot dead in September 2024 while being transported in a police van. The police claimed it was self-defence, but an inquiry report suggested it was a fake encounter. *—PTI*

PROTESTING PAHALGAM

Muslims stage a protest condemning the Pahalgam terrorist attack after Friday prayers at the Jama Masjid in Delhi. People streamed out of Jama Masjid after the morning prayer to gather for a protest against the attack. Tricolour fluttered down the Jama Masjid's iconic steps and along the street below to announce a Hindu-Muslim unity on Friday, as tributes poured in for Pahalgam victims across Delhi's mosques in namaz
PHOTO: PTI

India-Pakistan water sharing treaty discontinued

India has suspended a critical water-sharing treaty amid saber-rattling with Pakistan. The move comes after a deadly attack in India-administered Kashmir, which India blames on militants it says are backed by Pakistan.

Tensions between India and Pakistan are the highest they've been in years following a deadly attack on tourists in India-administered Kashmir on Tuesday, that New Delhi has blamed on what it says are militant groups supported by Islamabad. On Wednesday, India downgraded diplomatic ties with Pakistan, closed a key border crossing and, critically, said it would suspend a water-sharing treaty until "Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism."

Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Thursday challenged India to provide any evidence tying Pakistan to the attack that killed 26 people near the city of Pahalgam.

"India has repeatedly engaged in the blame game. If there is evidence of Pakistan's involvement in the Pahalgam incident, we urge them to share it with us and the international community," said Dar. In an address Thursday responding to the attack, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India would "identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backer."

The attack has shocked India because it targeted civilian tourists, representing an escalation from previous attacks in India-administered Kashmir that have mostly targeted security forces.

According to Indian media reports, there were five to six attackers, who shot for about 10 minutes in three spots at the Baisaran meadow in Pahalgam on Tuesday. They arrived from the nearby pine forests carrying rifles.

Survivors' accounts said the assailants approached the tourists and asked them their religion. They were asked to recite Islamic verses and if they failed, they were shot, reported Indian news channel NDTV.

The Indus Water Treaty was mediated by the World Bank and signed by India and Pakistan in 1960 ***PHOTO: PTI***

India and Pakistan both claim the northern Muslim-majority Kashmir region in full. But each country only rules parts of the area, making it a regional flash point with a decadeslong insurgency being waged against India in the parts it controls. India has claimed militant groups in the region are backed by Pakistan, a claim denied by Islamabad.

Blocking water an 'act of war' for Pakistan

After a high-level security meeting on Thursday, Pakistan announced a series of retaliatory measures against India. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's office said any attempt by India to divert the waters of the Indus River would be considered an "act of war." The Indus Water Treaty was mediated by the World Bank and signed by India and Pakistan in 1960. It has never been suspended, despite multiple wars and skirmishes between the archrival neighbors.

The treaty regulates the sharing of water from the Indus River and its tributaries. Pakistan is dependent on water flowing downstream from India-administered Kashmir. For years, Pakistan has been concerned that dams built by India could cut the flow of water into Pakistan.

According to Reuters news agency, the suspension of the treaty shouldn't have an immediate effect on water flow to Pakistan, as India does not have enough storage capacity to hold back the river. However, the suspension could affect information sharing on the water flows.

"The Indus Water Treaty may well be a relic of the past that requires considerable modifications, particularly due to climate change," Pakistan-based international law expert Osama Malik told DW. "However, even in its current state, it is a treaty that has been effective even in times of war. Article 12 allows only for a bilateral withdrawal from the treaty and there is no provision for a unilateral suspension.

"There has been unusually low rainfall and snow in Pakistan this year and if India, as a result of the unilateral and illegal suspension of this treaty, decides to reduce the flow, it would result in a catastrophic drought-like situation, and there would be food shortages," Malik added.

With Indian officials also suggesting the possibility of military strikes, observers in Pakistan are growing increasingly concerned. Television broadcasts are dominated by defense analysts cautioning about the unpredictable consequences that could arise if hostilities between the nuclear-armed neighbors escalate.

Maria Sultan, a defense analyst based in Islamabad, told DW that India's suspension of the water treaty amounts to "serious brinkmanship." *—DW News*

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Here's why Trump is targeting universities in US

A few days ago, in a move that attracted international attention, the White House threatened to strip Harvard University of USD 2 billion in federal funding, potentially revoke its tax-exempt status and even prevent it from enrolling international students if it didn't capitulate to a new list of demands.

The five-page ultimatum reads like a political ransom note. It calls on Harvard to make major "governance reform" including enforcing "viewpoint diversity" in admissions and hiring, squashing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, and more screening of foreign student applicants for their beliefs and reporting those who commit "conduct violations" to authorities.

Now, the White House says it was all a big misunderstanding – that the letter was "unauthorized" and that it was Harvard's fault for not recognising the mistake. Instead of "pick[ing] up the phone … Harvard went on a victimhood campaign," said a senior policy strategist for Trump in the New York Times. Never mind, as Harvard noted, that the letter was signed by three federal officials and printed on official letterhead.

But the war between the White House and Harvard is far from over. Trump is likely to be in it for the long game and have many more plays to make. On Monday, Harvard announced it was suing the Trump administration for its prior threat to axe the school's funding – a move Harvard said would have "severe and long-lasting" effects.

Harvard's huge USD 50 billion endowment gives it the ability to absorb federal spending cuts in a way that even other wealthy US universities can't.

"We are going to choke off the money to schools that aid the Marxist assault on our American heritage and on Western civilization itself," Trump has previously stated, hinting at his wider project to wield power over universities and significantly change the way they operate.

It's not just Harvard that's facing the heat — although as the nation's most prestigious and high-profile university, its decisions will set the tone for the rest of the sector. More than 40 universities across the US are under investigation by the Trump administration, including for alleged illicit actions by DEI offices and charges of tolerating anti-semitism.

It's hard to overstate the backlash. Princeton president Christopher Eisgruber has called Trump's latest moves "the greatest threat to American universities since the Red Scare of the 1950s". Political analyst Fareed Zakaria believes that the Trump White House is waging a version of Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution, when the Chinese leader took control of China's leading universities.

"No government — regardless of which party is in power — should dictate what private universities can teach, whom they can admit and hire, and which areas of study and inquiry they can pursue," said Harvard President Alan Garber.

Trump's attacks on universities follow a blueprint: identify institutions seen as elite, liberal and out of touch, and undercut their legitimacy relentlessly.

The current crackdown fits a broader pattern, which includes the dismantling of the US Agency for International Development, seen as a soft target when many Americans think the country spends too much on foreign aid, and swipes at some of the nation's top law firms, cast by Trump as part of an out-of-control, "rigged" legal system.

Perhaps the only question is why the Trump administration didn't come after universities sooner.

As CNN's Stephen Collinson has noted: "Harvard University is such a perfect foil for Trumpism that it's a wonder it avoided the MAGA maelstrom for so long."

Trump's latest tirade almost certainly has less to do with principle than political opportunity.

Recent polling from Gallup shows that trust in higher education has plummeted since roughly the first time Trump ran for President. The confidence Americans possessed in 2015 was 57%, today, that number is just 36%. For Republicans, those numbers have dropped even more sharply, from 56% to 20%.

The clash between Harvard and the White House is laying the groundwork for a high-stakes showdown, pitting academia's defenders against the Magaverse.

Yet it's possible to believe two things at once: that universities do suffer from some, even many, of the ailments that Trump has alleged; and that Trump's onslaught against higher education is strategically misguided, politically motivated and aimed at putting universities under the president's thumb. *—PTI*

More than 40 universities across the US are under investigation by the Trump administration
PHOTO: PTI

Pope's criticism on Gaza war strained ties between Israel &Vatican

Hours after Pope Francis' death was announced, Israel's Foreign Ministry posted a short message on X: "Rest in peace, Pope Francis. May his memory be a blessing." Several hours later, it was deleted without explanation.

Coming at a time of effusive global mourning over Francis' death, the decision to delete the post appeared to reflect the tensions that have emerged between Israel and the Vatican over Francis' frequent criticism of Israel's conduct during the war in Gaza. The Foreign Ministry declined to comment on the deletion.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is usually quick to issue statements on the passing of major international figures. But he has been silent on the pope's death, as has Foreign Minister Gideon Saar. The only official condolences came from Israel's president, Isaac Herzog, who holds a largely ceremonial role and who praised Francis for being "a man of deep faith and boundless compassion."

For most of Francis' papacy, ties between Israel and the Vatican steadily improved — highlighted by a visit to the Holy Land in 2014. But everything changed after the war in Gaza erupted with Hamas' deadly attack in southern Israel on 7 October, 2023.

While expressing sympathy for Israeli victims and hostages, Francis has suggested Israel's subsequent attacks in Gaza and Lebanon were "immoral" and disproportionate. He also called for an investigation to determine if Israel's attacks in Gaza constitute genocide, a charge Israel denies while investigations at the UN's top courts proceed.

Pope Francis was like a friend who tells the truth, even if that's not exactly what you want to hear, Abunassar said. Throughout the war, Francis walked a delicate balance between his close ties with Israel and condemning the devastating losses in Gaza, according to Amnon Ramon, an expert on Christianity in Israel and a senior researcher at the Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research. Francis was exceptionally close to Gaza's local parish priest, who, like the former pontiff, is from Argentina.

Israel has historically had a fragile relationship with the Vatican. It stems from anger over the Vatican's perceived lack of action during World War II, when critics argue Pope Pius XII kept silent during the Holocaust despite possible knowledge of the Nazi plan to exterminate the Jews. Supporters insist he used quiet diplomacy to save Jewish lives.

For most of Francis' papacy, ties between Israel and the Vatican steadily improved — highlighted by a visit to the Holy Land in 2014 ***PHOTO: PTI***

In the 1960s, the Vatican underwent a series of dramatic transformations, including, among other things, changing the Church's attitude towards Jews over what was long seen as their collective culpability for the crucifixion of Jesus, Ramon explained.

Christians make up less than 2 per cent of the Holy Land's population. There are about 182,000 in Israel, 50,000 in the West Bank and 1,300 in Gaza, according to the US State Department. At the start of Francis' papacy, the relationship with Israel warmed significantly. Francis visited the Holy Land in 2014 as one of his first international trips, when he met with Netanyahu, who was prime minister at the time. Then-President Shimon Peres visited the Vatican multiple times, including with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to plant a peace tree in the Vatican Gardens.

But the Israeli government's rightward shift, and the ongoing war with Gaza, strained the ties. "Pope Francis expressed himself for the first time on 8 October, the day after the war began, and he followed the same line right through the end of his life: war is defeat, there's no victory for war," said the Rev. David Neuhaus, a local priest who served as a spokesperson during the pope's 2014 visit.

"He expressed great concern for hostages, but said violence should stop and Israel is using force to something that cannot be achieved by force," Neuhaus said. Francis also met the families of hostages held in Gaza and Palestinians affected by the war.

In an interview with The Associated Press in April 2023, the leader of Catholics in the Holy Land, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa said that Netanyahu's far-right government has made life worse for Christians in the birthplace of Christianity. He noted an increase in attacks against Christian sites, pilgrims, and religious leaders.

Although world leaders, including US President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron, will attend Francis' funeral, Israel will only send its Vatican ambassador, a lower-level diplomat.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Oren Marmorstein said this was due partially to scheduling conflicts and the funeral taking place on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, which requires Israeli politicians to stay within walking distance of the funeral. The decision was not indicative of any tension with the Vatican, he said.

"Israel will be represented in the most official way in the funeral through our ambassador there," said Marmorstein. "There were things we didn't agree with, but we are taking part in the funeral."

"Pope Francis was one of the best friends of Israel, but Israeli leadership didn't understand him properly," said Abunassar, the coordinator of the Holy Land Christian forum.

"The man was the leader of the most important church in the world. The man was the head of state. The man has followers among people who are Israeli taxpayers. The man deserves some respect."

Neuhaus said he hopes the next pope will follow the same message as Francis.

"I hope it will be someone who will put emphasis on mercy, someone who could bring us all together," he said. "We live in such a divided, polarised world." *—PTI*

Xi -Trump clash over status of trade talks

Washington to reach trade deal with 15 countries within the next four weeks

WASHINGTON, 25 APRIL

Standoff between the two world's greatest economies seemed to continue even Trump insisted trade talks were hapenning with China.

Trump raised eyebrows in an interview with Time magazine published Friday, when he claimed to have received a call from Xi. "He's called. And I don't think that's a sign of weakness on his behalf," Trump told Time magazine, although he did not specify when the call occured or what was discussed.

Trump in the interview also said he expects to wrap up US tariff deals within next 3-4 weeks.

Trump provided no clarity either when speaking to reporters while leaving the White House for his trip to Rome to attend Pope Francis' funeral. "I don't want to comment on that. I've spoken to him many times." Trump said.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry has previously denied negotiations have been taking place. It had urged Washington to stop 'misleading the public' regarding the nature of trade negotiations signalling frustration over the US portrayal of talks.

Meanwhile, in first signs that Beijing was concerned about the fall out of tariffs, Reuters news agency reported that China exempted some US imports from 125 per cent tariffs and had asked businesses to identify critical goods they need to be levy-free. Beijing has so far maintained that all unilateral tariffs have to be cancelled for trade negotiations between the two countries.

Negotiations with other countries however seemed to be progressing as the Switzerland finance minister Karin Keller-Sutter said she was satisfied with talks held with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent who had earlier mentioned India may be the first country to sign a trade deal with US.

"The United States has defined a group of 15 countries with which it wants to find ... a quick solution in this tariff question. Switzerland is part of this group of these 15 countries," she told reporters separately late Thursday in Washington.

It was not clear however which countires the groups are holding privileged negotiations with US —*Agencies*

US President Trump and Xi Jinping, President of China **PHOTO: PTI**

US - Saudi to sign $100 bn arms deal

Washington/Riyadh, 25 April

The Trump administration is preparing to unveil a $100 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia during his visit to Riyadh in May, according to a report by news agency Reuters. The deal which involves several top US defence contractors who will supply a range of advanced military systems, transport aircraft, missiles and radar technology, comes amid growing competition with China and efforts by the US to bolster its influence in the Gulf. A US Defense Department official said defence cooperation was stronger under Trumps' leadership.n ever *– Agencies*

Trump orders probe into Dems' funds

Washington, 25 April

President Donald Trump has ordered the Justice Department to investigate the Democratic Party's top fundraising platform and submit a report in 180 days. Trump, in an executive order signed Thursday, directed Attorney General Pam Bondi to investigate allegations that ActBlue allows illegal campaign donations. Democrats, who had anticipated they would be targeted, condemned the move Thursday and ActBlue called it an "oppressive use of power" by the White House and asserted it would pursue all avenues to protect and defend itself. *—PTI*

Judge stays Trump's order on polls

New York, 25 April

A judge on Thursday blocked the Trump administration from immediately enacting certain changes to how federal elections are run, including adding a proof-of-citizenship requirement to the federal voter registration form. The decision s a setback for President Donald Trump, who has argued the requirement is needed to restore public confidence in elections. But the judge allowed other parts of Trump's sweeping executive order including a directive to tighten mail ballot deadlines around the country. *—PTI*

Lawsuit against Starbucks for using 'slave labour'

NEW YORK, 25 APRIL

International Rights Advocates has sued Starbucks alleging that it sourced coffee from a major cooperative in Brazil whose eight member farms kept workers in slave-like conditions. The lawsuit alleges that Starbucks violated US trafficking laws by continuing to buy coffee from Cooxupe even after Brazilian authorities repeatedly cited the cooperative for trafficking and forced labour violations. The plaintiffs said they were lured to farms with the promise of good pay and lodging. However, they resided in filthy housing and the cost of their transport and food was deducted from their pay. Starbucks refuted the claims and said Its verification programme included regular third-party audits to ensure labour and environmental practices met the company's standards.. *—PTI*

5 killed after Thai plane crashes into sea

BANGKOK, 25 APRIL

A small police plane on Friday crashed into the sea near a popular beach town in Thailand, killing five people on board. The plane, a Viking DHC-6 Twin Otter, was conducting a test flight to prepare for parachute training before it crashed near an airport in Hua Hin district around 8 am. Photographs show the plane to be broken in two in the sea about 100 meters off shore. There were six police officers on board. While five of them died at the scene, one officer was injured and sent to the hospital. His condition remains critical. The cause of the crash was not immediately known. Officials are gathering evidence including data from the plane's black box.*—PTI*

Australians, New Zealanders observe Anzac Day

MELBOURNE, 25 APRIL

Huge numbers of people across Australia and New Zealand participated in dawn services and street marches on Friday to commemorate their war dead on Anzac Day. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese attended a dawn service at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Opposition leader Peter Dutton laid a wreath at a dawn service in Brisbane. Protestors disrupted two Australian services. In 25 April, 1915 the newly formed Australia and New Zealand Army Corps landed on the beaches of Gallipoli in northwest Turkiye, in an ill-fated campaign. New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon travelled to Gallipoli to commemorate the 110th anniversary of the landing day. King Charles III, the head of state of New Zealand, thanked the country's World War II veterans for their service. *—PTI*

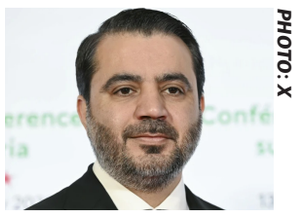


PHOTO: X

Syria's foreign minister debuts at UN

BEIRUT, 25 APRIL

Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani was at the United Nations headquarters in New York on Friday to raise his country's new three- starred flag and attend a UN Security Council briefing. CU The Syrian government has been courting Washington in hopes of receiving relief from harsh sanctions that were imposed by the US and its allies during the previous Assad regime. A delegation of Syrian officials visited US this week to attend World Bank and International Monetary Fund meetings in Washington and UN meetings in New York. The Trump administration has yet to officially recognise the Ahmad al-Sharaa led Syrian government. *—PTI*

PHOTO: @VATICANNEWS

WORLD LEADERS TO ATTEND POPE'S FUNERAL

Heads of state and royalty will start converging on Rome on Friday for the funeral of Pope Francis in the Vatican's St. Peter's Square. The Vatican said 130 delegations are confirmed, including 50 heads of state and 10 reigning sovereigns. US President Donald Trump with first lady Melania Trump are expected to arrive late Friday. Other dignitaries include Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and first lady Olena Zelenska, French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Prince William,

Indian President Droupadi Murmu along with Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs, Kiren Rijiju and other union ministers on Friday departed for Vatican City to attend the funeral of Pope Francis on Saturday, her office said in a post on X. *—PTI*

Russia continues strikes after Trump rebukes Putin

KYIV, 25 APRIL

A day after US President Donald Trump slammed Russian President Vladimir Putin for its airstrikes on Kyiv, a Russian drone struck an apartment building in a southeastern Ukraine city, killing three people and injuring 10 others, officials said Friday.

Russian forces fired 103 Shahed and decoy drones at five Ukrainian regions overnight, Ukraine's air force reported. Authorities in the northeastern Sumy and Kharkiv regions reported damage to civilian infrastructure but no casualties.

On Thursday, Trump called on Putin to stop the deadliest attacks yet on killing at least 12 people and injuring 87.

The rare rebuke of Putin comes as Trump's frustration grows as his effort to get a peace agreement between Ukraine and Russia has failed to make a breakthrough. Later Thursday when asked during an Oval Office meeting with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, as to what Putin was doing to forge a deal, Trump responded, "stopping taking the whole country, pretty big concession."

Europe have fiercely pushed back against this notion arguing that Russia pausing a land grab is hardly a concession.

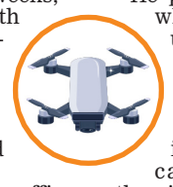
Meanwhile, a senior Russian military officer Lt. Gen. Yaroslav Moskalik was killed by a car bomb on Friday outside Moscow according to Russia's top criminal investigation agency. While no possible suspects were mentioned, on 17 December last year Lt. Gen. Igor Kirillov, was killed when in a bomb explosion outside his apartment. Russian authorities blamed Ukraine for the killing. *—PTI*

Ukrainian police officers stand near a damaged building after a Russian ballistic missile attack in Kyiv, Ukraine, early Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

Houthis shoot down $200M US drones

WASHINGTON, 25 APRIL

Houthi rebels in Yemen have shot down seven US Reaper drones in less than six weeks, a loss of aircraft worth more than USD 200 million in what is becoming the most dramatic cost to the Pentagon of the military campaign against the Iran-backed militants.



According to defence officials, three of the drones were shot down in the past week. They were doing attack runs or conducting surveillance, and they crashed both into the water and onto land, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

He promised to use "overwhelming lethal force" until the Houthis cease their attacks on shipping along a vital maritime corridor. The official noted that the increase in US strikes can add to the risk to aircraft, but said the US will take every measure possible to protect troops, equipment and interests in the region. . —PTI

NUCLEAR DEAL

Iran, US talks return to Oman

MUSCAT, 25 APRIL

Negotiations between Iran and the US over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear programme will return on Saturday to the secluded sultanate of Oman, where experts on both sides will start hammering the technical details of any possible deal.

The talks seek to limit Iran's nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of some of the crushing economic sanctions the US has imposed on the Islamic Republic, closing in on half a century of enmity.

PHOTO: X

Trump has repeatedly threatened to unleash airstrikes targeting Iran's programme if a deal isn't reached. Iranian officials increasingly warn that they could pursue a nuclear weapon with their stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels.

Neither Iran nor the US said why the talks will return to the Omani capital of Muscat. The talks last week in Rome offered a more-equal flight distance between Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and US Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff, who are leading the negotiations. But with Rome in mourning after the death of Pope Francis, whose funeral will be held on Saturday, talks have shifted to Muscat even as Iran appears to have lined up Chinese and Russian support. *—PTI*

Mahmoud Abbas **PHOTO: X**

PALESTINE CREATES VP POST FOR SUCCESSION

RAMALLAH, 25 APRIL

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has announced the creation of a vice presidency under leader Mahmoud Abbas amidst speculation about succession and push for reforms for future governance of Gaza.

After a two-day meeting, the council voted to create the position of the vice president of the State of Palestine who will be chosen among the 15 members of the PLO executive committee dominated by pro-Abbas loyalists. The President will have power to dismiss the vice president raising questions about the effectiveness of the new measure.

The PLO is the internationally recognised representative of the Palestinian people and oversees the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, which exercises limited autonomy in less than half of the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Abbas has led both the PLO and the Palestinian Authority (PA) for more than 2 decades and has remained in office despite his term ending in 2009.

Hamas seized control of Gaza from Abbas' forces in 2007 and reconciliation attempts between the rivals repeatedly failed.

More than 51,000 Palestininans have died since the Gaza war broke out. *—PTI*

CUTTING EDGE TECHNOLOGY

Dubai's Museum of the Future debuts humanoid robot

DUBAI, 24 APRIL

She can greet you in 6 languages, sense your delight and charm you with her intuitive responses. She is Ameca, an AI enabled advanced humanoid robot in Dubai's Museum of Future equipped with enhanced and sophisticated capabilities for interacting with visitors.

Museum visitors can meet the upgraded version of Ameca on the "Tomorrow, Today" floor, where it will serve as an intelligent assistant, offering a unique interactive experience.

Now capable of more realistic facial expressions, natural human-like responses, and precise movements, Ameca can communicate fluently with visitors in more than six languages, including Arabic, English, Chinese, Hindi, Spanish, and Russian, making it truly a multilingual smart assistant for global audiences.

Powered by the latest Tritium 3 system, Ameca seamlessly integrates with cutting-edge AI technologies, including facial and voice recognition as well as instant translation. The humanoid robot is also capable of analysing facial expressions and emotions, enabling more intuitive and human-like responses.

The Museum of the Future is set to host the AI Retreat, an exclusive invitation-only gathering of more than 100 global leaders, technology giants, government and private sector decision-makers and leading AI experts.

The event will explore the impact of AI across key areas including the economy, data, infrastructure, and talent development.

—ANI

AI-enabled humanoid robot 'Ameca' at Museum of the Future **PHOTO: DUBAI MUSEUM OF THE FUTURE**

PHOTO:FREEPIK

Gold prices slip by ₹669 to ₹95,243/10g

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

Gold prices on Friday declined Rs 669 to Rs 95,243 per 10g in futures trade amid muted spot demand. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, gold contracts for June delivery traded lower by Rs 669 or 0.7 per cent to Rs 95,243 per 10g in a business turnover of 17,974 lots. Analysts attributed the fall in gold prices to weak global cues. In the international markets, gold futures declined 1.15 per cent to USD 3,310.98 per ounce in New York. *—PTI*

Rupee falls 7P; settles at 85.40 against USD

MUMBAI, 25 APRIL

The rupee pared its initial gains and settled for the day lower by 7 paise at 85.40 against the US dollar on Friday, amid heightened geopolitical tensions and a negative trend in the domestic markets. Forex traders said escalated geopolitical tensions, following a terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir weighed on market sentiment. Moreover, a muted trend in domestic equities and positive US dollar index dented investors' sentiment further. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.17 and moved between the intra-day high of 85.08 and the low of 85.65 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.40 (provisional), registering a fall of 7 paise over its previous closing level. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading higher by 0.24 per cent at 99.61. *—PTI*

Maruti Q4 net profit dips 1% to ₹3,911 crore

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

Maruti Suzuki India on Friday said its consolidated net profit slipped 1 per cent year-on-year to Rs 3,911 crore in the fourth quarter ended 31 March, 2025. The country's largest carmaker reported a net profit of Rs 3,952 crore in the January-March quarter of FY24. Total revenue increased to Rs 40,920 crore during the March quarter last fiscal as compared with Rs 38,471 crore in the year-ago period, Maruti Suzuki India said in a regulatory filing. For the full year ended March 31, 2025, the maker of models like Swift and Grand Vitara reported a net profit of Rs 14,500 crore, up 7.5 per cent, against Rs 13,488 crore in 2023-24 fiscal. Revenue rose to Rs 1,52,913 crore in FY25 from Rs 1,41,858 crore in FY24. Shares of Maruti Suzuki were trading 0.58 per cent down at Rs 11,831.40 apiece on the BSE. *—PTI*

PHOTO:X

Escorts Kubota to hike tractor prices from May

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL Farm and construction equipment firm Escorts Kubota on Friday said it will hike prices of tractors from next month. The company's agri machinery business division will be increasing the prices of its tractors other than Kubota brand effective May 1, 2025, the company said in a regulatory filing. The increase in prices would vary across models/variants and geographies, it added. The company, however, did not elaborate on the quantum of the price hike. Shares of the company were trading 1.16 per cent down at Rs 3,349.70 apiece on Bombay Stock Exchange. *—PTI*

Pak may source Indian goods indirectly amid trade halts

May channel imports via 3rd countries, though at higher cost

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

Following the recent terror attack in Pahalgam, India has officially halted all trade with Pakistan, further escalating tensions between the two countries.

However, according to the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), this border closure is expected to stop only formal trade, not demand. Pakistan is likely to try to continue sourcing Indian goods indirectly through third countries, though at a higher cost.

GTRI mentioned that trade relations between India and Pakistan have remained strained since the Pulwama attack in February 2019. Since then, formal trade has largely been suspended, with only a few exports from India--mainly medicines--allowed on humanitarian grounds.

Despite the official trade freeze, India exported goods worth USD 447.7 million to Pakistan in the current fiscal year (April 2024 to January 2025), as per official data.

The Central government has suspended the SAARC Visa Exemption scheme, giving Pakistanis 48 hours to return to their country **PHOTO: PTI**

These exports primarily included essential items such as pharmaceuticals over USD 110.1 million, active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIS) worth USD 129.6 million, sugar valued at USD 85.2 million, auto parts worth USD 12.8 million, and fertilisers worth USD 6 million.

In contrast, India's imports from Pakistan were negligible, amounting to just USD 0.42 million. These imports included niche agricultural items, such as figs worth USD 78,000, and herbs like basil and rosemary, valued at USD 18,856.

Although formal trade channels are now completely closed, pakistan will try to continue the imports through informal routes via third countries. GTRI estimates that nearly USD 10 billion worth of trade still takes place through re-export routes, mainly via the United Arab Emirates and Singapore.

Pakistan reportedly imports several Indian products through these third countries, including pharmaceuticals, chemicals, cotton, tea, coffee, dyes, onions, tomatoes, iron, steel, sugar, salt, and auto parts. On the other hand, India may receive goods like Himalayan pink salt and dry fruits such as dates, apricots, and almonds from Pakistan through similar indirect routes. *—ANI*

Supply chain, engine issues dog aviation sector: Report

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

The Indian aviation industry continues to face serious disruptions due to the ongoing supply chain issues and engine related problems, credit rating agency ICRA said.

These challenges have significantly impacted the operational capacity of airlines, leading to higher costs and operational delays, it said.

"The industry has been facing supply-chain challenges and issues of engine failures for the Pratt and Whitney (P&W) engines supplied to various airlines," the report said.

It added that Go Airlines (India) Limited was among the worst-hit, grounding nearly half of its fleet in FY2024 due to faulty engines. The airline was finally ordered to be liquidated in January 2025, by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).

Another major airline, InterGlobe Aviation Limited (IndiGo), had around 60-70 aircraft grounded as of January 30, 2025. This included aircraft affected by powder metal contamination, a defect in materials used to make engine parts.

- It added that Go Airlines (India) Limited was among the worst-hit, grounding nearly half of its fleet in FY2024 due to faulty engines. The airline was finally ordered to be liquidated in January 2025, by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)

As a result, approximately 133 aircraft belonging to select Indian airlines were grounded in March 2025, which accounted for nearly 16 per cent of the total fleet.

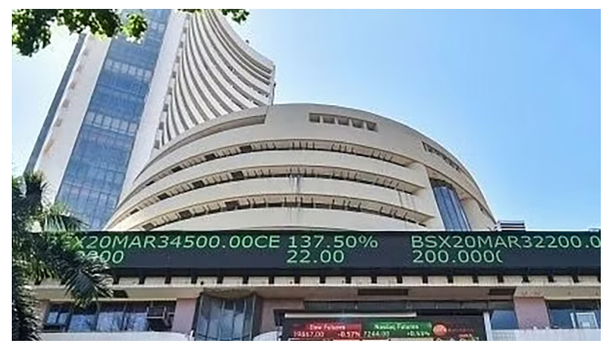
Although this number is slightly better than the 154 grounded aircraft as of September 30, 2023, it still represents a major blow to the industry's capacity. These capacity constraints have affected the available seat kilometre (ASKM), a key industry metric used to measure airline capacity. *—ANI*

India could grow at 6.5% in FY26, says EY report

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

Indian economy could grow at 6.5 per cent in the current fiscal as lower prices of crude oil are expected to ease inflationary pressure and support domestic growth, despite intensifying global trade tensions, an EY report said on Friday.

The 'EY Economy Watch' report for April identifies four key interlinked effects which would have a bearing on India's growth — reduced exports, global slowdown, falling crude oil prices, and the impact of global excess production capacities. "With suitable fiscal and monetary policies, India may be able to sustain a real GDP growth at about 6.5 per cent in FY26 as also in the medium term, while maintaining a CPI inflation below 4 per cent," EY India Chief Policy Advisor DK Srivastava said. The report also said exports may slow due to higher tariffs and weakening global demand. *— PTI*



Markets slump, Axis Bank shares drop over 3%

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

Shares of Axis Bank on Friday ended more than 3 per cent lower after the country's third largest private sector lender reported a decline in the March quarter profit.

The stock declined 3.48 per cent to settle at Rs 1,165.30 apiece on the BSE. During the day, it dropped 5 per cent to Rs 1,145.75.

On the NSE, it went lower by 3.46 per cent to Rs 1,165.30 per share.

The company's market valuation eroded by Rs 12,971.93 crore to Rs 3,60,973.43 crore.

Wiping out all early gains, the 30-share BSE barometer tanked 588.90 points or 0.74 per cent to settle at 79,212.53. Falling for the second day, the NSE Nifty tumbled 207.35 points or 0.86 per cent to 24,039.35.

A 64 per cent rise in loan loss provisions and a steep fall in the trading income were the primary reasons for the decline in the bottom line, along with a shift in the bank's strategies.

Its Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Amitabh Chaudhry said it chose to focus on profitability over growth in FY25, given the difficult environment.

Overall provisions moved up to Rs 1,359 crore as against Rs 1,185 crore in the year-ago period, but it was a 64 per cent rise in loan loss provisions at Rs 1,369 crore, which hurt the profits.

Trading income dropped 83 per cent to Rs 173 crore from Rs 1,021 crore in the quarter-ago period. *—PTI*

Gensol shares in free-fall, drop for 12th day in series

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

Shares of Gensol Engineering continued to face drubbing, tumbling 5 per cent on Friday, to hit fresh lower circuit limit, amid the ongoing crisis at the firm.

The stock of the crisis-hit firm tanked 4.96 per cent to Rs 91.05 -- the lowest trading permissible limit for the day as well as a 52-week low level -- on the BSE.

At the NSE, it dropped 5 per cent to Rs 90.16 -- the lower circuit as well as 52-week low. The stock has been tumbling for 12 trading days, including Friday. Shares of the firm have lost over 44 per cent in 12 days. From its 52-week high of Rs 1,125.75, the stock has tumbled 91.91 per cent. *—PTI*

GOOGLE–KANTAR REPORT

75% Indians desire daily growth collaborator

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

Google and Kantar released a study to understand Gen AI adoption, potential, and impact among people in India, surveying over 8,000 people across 18 cities.

The study found that while AI excitement is high, it's still early days for adoption: 60 per cent aren't familiar with AI, and only 31 per cent have tried any Generative AI tool.

The research also showed a strong, innate desire among Indians to improve and excel, with the majority seeking to boost productivity (72 per cent), enhance creativity (77 per cent), and communicate more effectively (73 per cent) in their daily lives.

On average, 75 per cent of Indians desire a daily growth collaborator.

The study underlines the massive headroom for Gen-AI adoption in India, people's desire to use such tools to excel in life, and how Google Gemini is helping Indians boost their confidence and capabilities.

Gen AI tools like Gemini are increasingly meeting this desire of a collaborative guide.

Google is seeing significant positive impact among early adopters: 92 per cent of Gemini users report a boost in confidence, 93 per cent report it has supercharged their productivity, 85 per cent Gemini users in India feel it helps spark their creativity, among other benefits.

Google also unveiled new Gemini features enabled by Google's best, state-of-the-art AI models. *—ANI*

Road safety experts call for dedicated two-wheeler lanes

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

Road safety experts on Friday emphasised the need for dedicated lanes for two-wheelers and stricter enforcement of traffic laws to enhance rider safety and reduce accidents.

Addressing an event here, Institute of Road Traffic Education (IRTE) President Rohit Baluja said electric two-wheelers are about 44 per cent of the total two-wheelers in the country.

"What needs to be done is have dedicated driving lanes for them, this will help in rider safety and avoid crashes as they are the most vulnerable road users along with pedestrians," he said.

Baluja said India accounts for the highest number of fatal road accidents with 4.8 lakh road crashes each year resulting in 1.8 lakh deaths.

PHOTO:PIXABAY

The government's top priorities are road safety, expansion of safe highways, vehicle safety, and bolstering electric vehicles, he added.

International Road Federation(IRF) president Emeritus K K Kapila said two-wheelers are the lifeline of major cities in the country, despite improvements in public transport.

The only solution is to find ways and means to make them safe through the use of technology, Kapila added.

Hero Motocorp Ltd Executive Advisor Harjeet Singh said most two-wheeler riders know that flouting traffic rules can lead to accidents, they still choose to violate rules. What is needed, he stressed, is a change in mindset, better education, and strict enforcement of traffic laws. *—PTI*

GOVT NOTIFIES RULES FOR GST E-FILING

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

The government has notified the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal Rules, which provide for e-filing of applications and conducting hearings in a hybrid mode. The rules also provide that any urgent matter filed by an applicant before 12.00 noon shall be listed before the Appellate Tribunal on the following working day.

In exceptional cases, the application may be received after 12.00 noon but before 3pm for listing on the following day, with the specific permission of the Appellate Tribunal or President. The administrative offices of the Appellate Tribunal will remain open on all working days from 9.30am to 6pm, according to the GSTAT (Procedure) Rules, 2025. *—PTI*

INDIA'S FAVOURITE FIZZ

Kinley Soda earning ₹1,500 cr in India

NEW DELHI, 25 APRIL

Beverage major Coca-Cola India on Friday said its Kinley Soda brand has crossed Rs 1,500 crore in revenue in the Indian market, emerging as a leader in the category.

The success of Kinley Soda underscores Coca-Cola India's commitment to the market with innovation, backed by data-led decisions, supply chain strength and a sharp focus on what consumers seek in the refreshment segment, the company said in a statement.

This milestone had been achieved through over two decades of consumer trust, a demand-led portfolio, and the company's strategy of making beverages accessible to consumers, it added.

"From nimbu sodas at street-side thelas to premium hospitality mixers, the brand has built a reputation as a dependable, high-quality soda. Its crisp taste and signature carbonation have made it a staple across occasions, outlets, and generations," said Coca-Cola India.

Kinley Soda is available in more than 1.4 million retail outlets in India, across channels from neighbourhood kirana stores to fast-growing quick commerce like Swiggy and Zepto **PHOTO: X**

Kinley Soda, is available in more than 1.4 million retail outlets in India, across channels from neighbourhood kirana stores to fast-growing quick commerce like Swiggy and Zepto, to premium shelves at modern trade channels.

Coca-Cola is one of the country's leading beverage companies in India. It operates with beverage brands, which include Coca-Cola, Coca-Cola Zero Sugar, Diet Coke, Thums Up, Charged by Thums Up, Fanta, Limca, Sprite, Maaza, Minute Maid range of juices and juice beverages.

The company also offers hydration beverages, including Limca Sportz, Smartwater, Kinley, Dasani, Bonaqua packaged drinking water, and Kinley Club Soda. In the premium segment, it has Schweppes range and Smartwater. Coca-Cola also owns Costa Coffee. *—PTI*

RBI cancels licence of Imperial Urban Co-op Bank

MUMBAI, 25 APRIL

PHOTO:ANI

The Reserve Bank of India on Friday said it has cancelled the licence of Jalandhar-based Imperial Urban Co-operative Bank as the lender does not have adequate capital and earning prospects.

The Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Government of Punjab has also been requested to issue an order for winding up of the bank and appoint a liquidator for the bank.

On liquidation, every depositor would be entitled to receive deposit insurance claim amount of his/her deposits up to Rs 5 lakh from Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC).

As per the data submitted by the bank, RBI said 97.79 per cent of the depositors are entitled to receive the full amount of their deposits from DICGC.

As on January 31, 2025 DICGC has already paid Rs 5.41 crore of the total insured deposits.

Giving reasons for cancellation of the licence of Imperial Urban Co-operative Bank, the RBI said the continuance of the bank is prejudicial to the interests of its depositors.

Consequent to the cancellation of its licence, Imperial Urban Co-operative Bank has been prohibited from conducting the business of 'banking' which includes, among other things, acceptance of deposits and repayment of deposits with immediate effect. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Good start for Sharma at Hainan Classic

HAINAN, 25 APRIL

Indian golfer Shubhankar Sharma was off to a promising start at the Hainan Classic, returning a 3-under 69 to be placed Tied-17 after the end of the first round here Friday. Sharma, who missed the cut in Shanghai last week despite a strong day two, was 2-under through 14 holes before play was suspended on Thursday. The Indian had two birdies and on Friday morning sank an eagle and a bogey for a card of 69 at the Blackstone Course in Mission Hills Resort Haikou in Hainan Island. Haotong Li played a round in the 60s for the 14th time in his last 19 rounds to catapult himself into the top spot in the DP World Tour event alongside Kiradech Aphibarnrat and Kristoffer Reitan. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

NBA great Jason joins ownership group of PL

LONDON, 25 APRIL

NBA great Jason Kidd has entered the soccer world by joining the ownership group of English Premier League club Everton. The Hall of Fame point guard and current Dallas Mavericks coach said he was "honored" to join Roundhouse Capital Holdings, which is part of the Friedkin Group that took control of Everton last year. The group also owns the Italian team Roma. —*PTI*

USOPC fires coach and director after report of sexual abuse

NEW YORK, 25 APRIL

The U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee has fired a coach and a director after The Associated Press reported that the coach was accused of sexually abusing a young biathlete, causing her so much distress that she attempted suicide. "Following our thorough internal evaluation, we can confirm that Gary Colliander and Eileen Carey are no longer affiliated with the USOPC," spokesman Jon Mason told the AP. He refused to provide a reason, saying only that Colliander was put on administrative leave from the Paralympic team in December, days after the AP report on the alleged misconduct. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Paul named for T20 Mumbai League council

MUMBAI, 25 APRIL

Former Mumbai and Himachal Pradesh cricketer Paul Valthaty was on Friday named as the Indian Cricketers Association's nominee for the T20 Mumbai League governing council. The T20 Mumbai League will make a comeback next month with the eight-team event set to be played from 26 May, a day after the conclusion of the Indian Premier League, till 8 June.The competition was previously held in 2018 and 2019. India captain Rohit Sharma has been appointed the brand ambassador of the competition, which has seen more than 2,800 player registrations.—*PTI*

Iyer returns to Eden to lead PBKS against KKR

Twelve months ago, Shreyas had led KKR to their first IPL title in a decade

Punjab Kings will take on Kolkata Knight Riders at Kolkata — PHOTO: PTI

KOLKATA, 25 APRIL

The man who led them to glory just a season ago could now stand in the way of Kolkata Knight Riders' playoff qualification when the side hosts the Shreyas Iyer-led revamped Punjab Kings in a high-stakes IPL clash here at the Eden Gardens on Saturday.

Twelve months ago, Iyer had led KKR to their first IPL title in a decade. On Saturday, he returns in opposition colours, at the helm of a rejuvenated Punjab side chasing a playoff spot.

Let go by KKR in one of the most surprising off-season moves, Iyer has found both comfort and purpose in the Punjab Kings.

Reuniting with his old Delhi Capitals mentor Ricky Ponting, the duo has steadied PBKS into the top five of the table with five wins from eight games.

The partnership has given Iyer the space to lead confidently and he has tallied 263 runs with three half-centuries so far. However, he comes into the weekend game, carrying three single digit scores.

Saturday offers him the perfect chance to make a statement much like KL Rahul did the other day against his former franchise, Lucknow Super Giants, with a composed 57 not out. —*PTI*

> **Ishant Sharma was looking beyond in the Test format, it was difficult to see light at the end of the tunnel for the beanpole pacer.**
>
> -Rahul Dravid, former India head coach

LSG VS SRH

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	34
KKR Won:	21
PBKS Won:	13

LSG vs SRH Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

Hazlewood is great under pressure: Andy Flower

BENGALURU, 25 APRIL

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Josh Hazlewood is a world-class bowler who can soak in the pressure in any format of the game and knows what delivery to bowl at a particular moment, said head coach Andy Flower after the IPL side defeated Rajasthan Royals by 11 runs here.

RCB notched their first win in four games at home to rise to the No. 3 spot on the points table, with Hazlewood's death-overs bowling making a huge impact. The Australian took four wickets and gave away only seven runs in his last two overs to return figures of 4-0-33-4 as RCB recorded their sixth win in nine matches. "I would probably refer to both of his last overs because his two overs went for seven runs, and he took three wickets in them. Both those overs showed the class of the guy," Flower told the media after the match.

"He's a class operator, he's a world-class bowler, he is great under pressure in any format of the game. I know he's known for his heavy length bowling, but he's got some great all-round skills. —*PTI*

LATE DOUBLE BOGEY SPOILS ADITI'S CARD IN CHEVERON C'SHIPS

WOODLANDS, 25 APRIL

Indian golfer Aditi Ashok was one-over with two holes to play in the weather-hit first round of the Chevron Championship, one of the women's Majors.

She currently sits at T-61. Having started the first round from the back nine with a bogey on the 10th hole she kept it tidy before managing the birdie on the 16th hole.

This was followed by two more birdies on her second nine on the third and the fourth holes.

However, just before the suspension of play, Aditi had a double bogey on the sixth and a bogey on the seventh to go from 2-under to 1-over in a matter of two holes.

Two-time LPGA Tour winner Haeran Ryu and recent Epson Tour graduate Yan Liu carded bogey-free rounds of seven-under par to share the lead at the end of the first day.

Yan Liu played her career-best round just last week when she hit a 63 at the JM Eagle LA Championship, and Yan Liu hit seven birdies in the first round. —*PTI*

AUSTRALIA TOUR WILL HELP US ASSESS WHERE WE STAND: HARENDRA

PERTH, 25 APRIL

The challenging Australia tour, beginning Saturday, will help the Indian women's hockey team assess where it stands, chief coach Harendra Singh said on Friday, adding that they will also experiment with combinations, keeping in mind important future assignments. The Salima Tete-led Indian team will clash with Australia 'A' in Perth on 26 and 27 April, and take on the senior team on 1, 3, and 4. May

Australia has traditionally been a strong rival, winning 10 of the 16 matches played between the two sides, while drawing three.

Harendra is confident that the strenuous month-long training camp in Bengaluru has prepared the team well for the matches. "The team has trained intensely during the camp in Bengaluru, and this tour will help us assess where we stand," said Harendra, who took over from Dutch Janneke Schopman following her resignation in the aftermath of the team's failure to qualify for the Paris Olympics. —*PTI*

Boxing Championship: Khushi, Tikam in SF

AMMAN, 25 APRIL

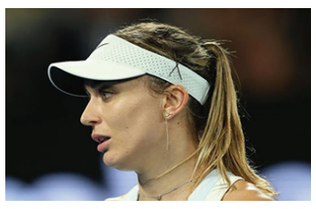
Khushi Chand and Tikam Singh were among the Indian boxers who reached the semi-finals of the Asian U-15 & U-17 Championships being held here.

Khushi (46 kg), a bronze-medallist at the 2024 Asian School Boys & Girls Boxing Championship in Abu Dhabi, forced an early end to her quarterfinal bout against Vietnam's Nguyen Thi Hong Yen after out-boxing her.

Tikam (52 kg) got the better of Palestine's Othman Diab in his last-eight contest, which also ended early. In the men's section, Ambekar Meetei (48 kg), Udham Singh (54 kg), and Rahul Gariya (57 kg) won by unanimous 5-0 decisions, while Aman Dev (50 kg) edged past Jordan's Osamah Al-Khaldi 3-2 in a tight bout.

Khushi Chand

Jiya (48 kg) defeated Vietnam's Thi Ru Na Dinh for a 5-0 win while Jannat (54 kg) overpowered Ukraine's Anhelina Rumiantseva 4-1. —*PTI*



INJURED BADOSA WITHDRAWS FROM MADRID OPEN

MADRID, 25 APRIL

Spanish world number nine Paula Badosa announced on Friday her withdrawal from the Madrid Open due to a persistent lower back injury.

"I wanted to let you know that unfortunately I won't be able to play the Madrid Open," the former world number two announced on social media.

"I've tried to do everything possible until the last moment because you know how excited I am to play at home, but it's been a complicated injury.

"I hope to be 100 percent soon," Badosa added.

The 27-year-old has not taken to the court since pulling out at the round-of-16 stage of the Miami Open in March with a back problem.

Badosa was scheduled to make her return on Friday in the second round at Madrid, but compatriot Cristina Bucsa now takes her spot in the main draw to face Veronika Kudermetova of Russia.

Before the start of the tournament, Badosa did hint at her possible withdrawal, telling the WTA's site: "It's been a tough injury, honestly, this one because it was different from the last one. It was an injury that was touching the nerves. —*PTI*

GERMAN LEAGUE TITLE

Kane is in sight of his first major trophy

MUNICH, 25 APRIL

World soccer's great runner-up is finally about to lift a trophy. Harry Kane is on the verge of winning the German league title with Bayern Munich, and he could seal the deal on Saturday.

After a career filled with individual top scorer awards and a host of runner-up medals, the Champions League, two European Championships, and two English League Cups, it will be the first major trophy of Kane's career.

A player who's often talked of putting the team above himself will finally get his reward.

"If it's me scoring a couple of goals, I'll take that for sure, but if it's someone else, I'm not going to worry too much," Kane said this month. "All those kinds of individual achievements are what you think about after it's done."

Harry Kane

Bayern has an eight-point lead over second-place Leverkusen with four games to play. The title could be confirmed Saturday if Bayern beats Mainz and Bayer Leverkusen doesn't beat Hoffenheim.

"No one deserves it more than him," Bayern's honorary president Uli Hoeness told broadcaster Sky on Wednesday.

Why hasn't Kane won a trophy before? There's been bad luck along the way, and Kane's trophy drought has sometimes brought mockery from opposition fans.

At Tottenham, it often seemed like Kane and Son Heung-min were working wonders with a team that couldn't match rivals' budgets. Tottenham has been in sharp decline since its all-time top scorer left.

There have been tough days, especially when Kane was limited by an ankle injury in Tottenham's 2-0 loss to Liverpool in the 2019 Champions League final, or England's penalty shootout loss to Italy at his home European Championship two years later. —*PTI*

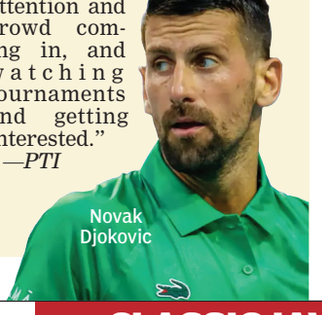
Tennis will always outlive its star players: Djokovic

MADRID, 25 APRIL

Novak Djokovic, winner of a record 24 Grand Slam titles, says he can feel the changes taking place in tennis.

People have started to accept, he says, that there is no more Roger Federer, no more Rafael Nadal, and soon no more Djokovic.

"You can feel there's a shift," the 37-year-old said ahead of his opening match at this year's Madrid Open, where he will try to win a milestone 100th tour-level title. "Not only in terms of the generations of players (who now have) the main focus and attention. But I guess it takes a little bit of time for people to accept the fact that Roger and Rafa are not playing, and (Andy) Murray, and I guess one day myself." Djokovic said he has been trying his best to "represent the older guys, the older generation," and bring a "positive effect to the tournaments and to the tour itself.""That's also one of the reasons why I keep on playing," he said. "Because I feel like it also helps tennis still thrive on the attention and crowd coming in, and watching tournaments and getting interested." —*PTI*



Novak Djokovic

BRUISED ALEX MARQUEZ SETS COURSE TO TOP JEREZ PRACTICE TIMES

PARIS, 25 APRIL

Alex Marquez climbed back on his bike Friday to set a Jerez course record in a flag and fall-filled final practice session for the Grand Prix of Spain. The younger Marquez brother set a time of 1min 35.991sec on a Ducati Gresini, 0.103sec ahead of Italy's Francesco Bagnaia on a factory Ducati and 0.036 inside the course record the Italian set last year.

Italian Franco Morbidelli was third on a VR46 Ducati. Championship leader Marc Marquez was fourth on a factory Ducati. Frenchman Fabio Quartararo, displaying the rediscovered competitiveness of his Yamaha, was fifth and the top non-Ducati. —*PTI*

Oleksandr Usyk and Dubois set for rematch

LONDON, 25 APRIL

Heavyweight boxing looks to be getting another fight for the undisputed championship, with Oleksandr Usyk set to meet Daniel Dubois in a rematch in July.

The fight will take place on July 19 in London's Wembley Stadium as reported by The Ring Magazine, a publication owned by Turki Alalshikh — chairman of the Saudi General Entertainment Authority and the organizer of boxing events for the kingdom.

The bout hasn't been officially confirmed by either of the Usyk or Dubois camps.

The 38-year-old Usyk, who holds the WBA, WBC, and WBO belts and is undefeated as a pro, stopped Dubois in the ninth round of a controversial first fight between them in Poland in August 2023.

In the fifth round, the fight was halted for what the referee ruled a low blow by Dubois, which sent his rival to the canvas, with replays showing the punch hitting around Usyk's belt.

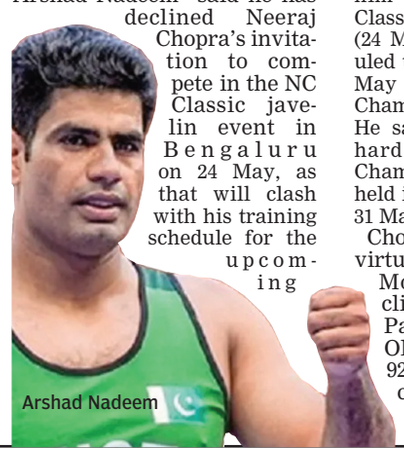
It was not given as a knockdown, no points were deducted from Dubois, and Usyk was given time to recover. —*PTI*

CLASSIC JAVELIN EVENT

Nadeem declines Neeraj Chopra's invite

LAHORE, 25 APRIL

Pakistan's Olympic champion Arshad Nadeem said he has declined Neeraj Chopra's invitation to compete in the NC Classic javelin event in Bengaluru on 24 May, as that will clash with his training schedule for the upcoming Asian Athletics Championships. Nadeem, however, said he was grateful to Chopra for inviting him to the event."The (NC) Classic event is from 20th May (24 May), whereas I am scheduled to leave for Korea on 22nd May for the Asian Athletics Championship," Nadeem said. He said he had been training hard for the Asian Championship, which will be held in Gumi, Korea, from 27 to 31 May.



Arshad Nadeem

Chopra told reporters in a virtual media interaction on Monday.Nadeem had clinched gold in the 2024 Paris Games with an Olympic record throw of 92.97m, beating Chopr, who could manage 89.45m to win the silver.

India names 59-member team for Asian Athletics C'ships in Korea; Neeraj to skip

India on Friday named a 59-member team for the upcoming Asian Athletics Championship in South Korea with star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra expectedly skipping the event, with almost all those who had excelled in the just-concluded Federation Cup in Kochi making the cut.

Double Olympic medallist Chopra missing the event was on expected lines as his focus this season will be on the Diamond League Meetings and the World Championships in September, besides the NC Classic, which he is hosting in Bengaluru on 24 May. —*PTI*

Neeraj Chopra